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## **Doing Gender Well and Differently in Dirty Work: A Case of Exotic Dancing**

Submitted for Second Review to

Gender, Work and Organization

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## **Doing Gender Well and Differently in Dirty Work: A Case of Exotic Dancing**

### **Abstract**

Exotic dancing, as a form of sex work, can be considered dirty work that is physically, morally and socially tainted. For some dirty workers, exaggerating aspects of the work associated with masculinity or femininity can re-position the work as clean, good work and serve as a strategy for dirty workers to construct positive self-identities. This process however, is not easy or effective for all dirty workers. We consider the experiences of 21 exotic dancers and theorize that the doing of gender well (exaggerated expressions of masculinity or femininity in congruence with sex role) can be a strategy for some dirty workers to re-position their work into good work (or less dirty), while for others (specifically these exotic dancers) the doing of gender well, will have different consequences. In doing this, we also explore the possibilities of doing gender differently for these exotic dancers and extending this to our understanding of other types of sex work and dirty work.

### **Key Words:**

**Exotic Dancers, Doing Gender, Identity, Dirty Work, Sex Work**

## Doing Gender Well and Differently in Dirty Work: A Case of Exotic Dancing

### Introduction

Dirty work is understood to be work that is viewed to be degrading or disgusting in some way; it is physically, morally or socially tainted (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Hughes, 1958). In this way, dirty work is bad work. Those that perform the work are seen to personify the work so that they over time become dirty workers who are stigmatized in the same way as the work they perform (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). In dirty work occupations exaggerated forms of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) can provide a means through which the worker manages the stigma associated with the work and re-positions the dirty or bad work into honourable or good work. For example, butchers take pride in their ability to withstand extremely cold working conditions and take comfort in the danger of using knives and sharp automated equipment (Meara, 1974). In this way, butchers express exaggerated aspects of the work associated with masculinity; they are braver and tougher than men who perform other jobs (Meara, 1974). This doing of gender involves constructing positive self-identities so that the workers can become honourable, clean and good workers (or at least more honourable, cleaner and better). We conceptualize these exaggerated expressions of doing gender as doing gender *well* (or appropriately) against sex category. Here we theorize that for some dirty workers, specifically sex workers, doing gender well will not be enough to re-position bad girls (and bad work) into good girls (and good work). Indeed, in order to be *good* at their job, sex workers are expected to perform exaggerated expressions of doing gender (e.g., large breasts, attentive, good conversationalists, non-argumentative, needing to be rescued, sexual) (e.g., Dragu and Harrison, 1988; Wood, 2000). At the same time, the nature of sex work is such that it symbolizes bad sex (sex outside marriage, public, promiscuous, and not for reproductive purposes) (Frank, 2002; Rubin, 1993). So while being good at their work through exaggerated expressions of doing gender (and thus good workers), sex workers are still perceived to be bad or dirty workers. In effect, exotic dancers may be simultaneously both good and bad workers. Our concern is how do these dirty workers do gender and manage the pervasiveness of the stigma associated with their work and identities? Given the complexity of sex work as both bad (and dirty) work and bad sex, we set out to explore localized accounts of dirty workers, namely exotic dancers, to understand how they do gender well and do gender differently in managing the stigma associated with their work and identities.

Since West and Zimmerman's (1987) foundational work on doing gender there has been extensive research exploring the doing of gender in organizations. Most recently, considerable debate has emerged about the possibility of undoing gender (e.g. Butler, 2004; Kelan, 2010) and the limitations imposed by the binary divide underpinning much of the literature (Linstead and Pullen, 2006). West and Zimmerman (2009) however, continue to position gender not so much as undone as re-done, while Kelan (2010) argues for the possibilities of doing gender differently. We draw upon West and Zimmerman's (1987, 2009), Messerschmidt's (2009) and Kelan's (2010) work in our understanding of doing gender for this research. We are interested in understanding how the doing of gender well, can be a strategy for some dirty workers to re-position their work into good work (or less dirty), while for others (specifically exotic dancers) the doing of gender well, will have different consequences. Our research objectives then include: a. to fuse the doing gender, sex work, exotic dancing and dirty work literature; b. to explore

localized accounts of how exotic dancers as dirty workers manage the stigma associated with their work and their identities as they do gender; and c. to explore possibilities of doing gender differently.

In exploring how these workers do gender and manage the stigma associated with their work and identities, our contribution is three-fold. Building upon the work of Tracy and Scott (2006) and Dick (2005) in theorizing how dirty workers do gender, we bring together the stigma management strategies from the dirty work literature and illuminate the doing of gender within these strategies. In doing so, we build upon the existing literature into the complexity of doing gender in stigmatized occupations, that is, sex work occupations and dirty work occupations more broadly. Second, we build upon current research on doing gender and doing gender differently (e.g., Kelan, 2010; West and Zimmerman, 2009) and contribute to the debate that doing gender can be done 'well' and differently (through multiple ways, simultaneously). Third, we illustrate that doing gender well may have different consequences in different types of work. In this way, our study on doing gender in exotic dancing may be extended to other dirty workers and to organizations in general.

## **Doing Gender**

Poggio (2006) notes that the traditional essentialist conception of male and female as ascribed individual traits has been superseded and progressed to recognizing gendering processes: gender is constantly redefined and negotiated in the everyday practices through which individuals interact. Doing gender involves a 'complex of socially guided perceptual and interactional and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'' (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.126). Doing gender approaches have been useful to show that gender is not a property of person but a process that people enact in everyday situations (Linstead and Pullen, 2006). Indeed, West and Zimmerman view gender as 'a routine, methodical and recurring accomplishment' (1987, p. 126) embedded in everyday interaction.

Underpinning their concept of doing gender, West and Zimmerman (1987) analytically distinguish between sex, sex categorization and gender; a source of much critique. Sex categorization involves the display and recognition of a socially regulated external mark of sex (Goffman, 1959). The relationship between sex category and gender is one between being a recognizable incumbent of a sex category and being accountable to current cultural conceptions of behaviour associated, or compatible with, the 'essential natures' of a woman or a man (West and Zimmerman, 1987). West and Zimmerman conceptualize this relationship as a process that is ongoing, situated, a doing-not being and therefore 'the activities of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category' (1987, p. 20).

Our approach to doing gender in this research follows West and Zimmerman (1987) and Messerschmidt (2009), in that individuals do not possess gender, but rather gender is something individuals do in interactions with others. Individuals accomplish gender in ways that are accountable to interaction, and their specific type of gender construction articulates with particular social situations. 'Sex category serves as a resource for the interpretation of situated social conduct, as copresent interactants in each setting attempt to hold accountable behaviors as

a female or a male; that is, socially defined membership in one sex category is used as a means of discrediting or accepting masculine or feminine practices' (Messerschmidt, 2009, p.86). People are thus already categorized by sex when they do gender (Kelan, 2010) and the body is not neutral in doing gender; it is an agent of social practice which can constrain, facilitate, mediate and influence social practices (Messerschmidt, 2009). Whilst race and class do not form part of our research focus, we acknowledge that gender relations between men and women are not separate to race and class. They are interwoven with doing gender and that as social relations, race and class arise in the organization of struggle against inequalities that people face (Smith, 2009; Trautner, 2005).

There have been other developments in the study of doing gender including: the relative positioning of gender in a social context (Alcoff, 1988); the performativity of gender (Butler, 1990, 1993); theory of gender practice (Connell, 1987); gender practice and practising (Martin, 2003, 2006), and gender as a social practice (Alvesson, 1998; Bruni and Gherardi, 2002; Bruni *et al.*, 2004; Czarniawska, 2006; Gherardi and Poggio, 2001; Martin, 2001, 2003; Nentwich, 2003). Despite these developments, Kelan (2010) argues that most doing gender approaches operate on a binary basis, in which the gender binary is mapped or mapped differently but the binary as such is not questioned (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Linstead and Brewis, 2004). In questioning the binary divide, more recent approaches have sought to undo gender (e.g., Butler, 2004; Hancock and Tyler, 2007; Nentwich, 2006; Pullen and Knights, 2008). 'Doing gender is the process through which the gender binary is enacted' (Kelan, 2010, p.182). Some argue this can be undone by not referring to or ignoring the gender binary (e.g., Hirschauer, 1994, 2001, cited in Kelan, 2010) or by destabilizing it through positions which question the naturalness of the gender binary or disturbing it through different and confusing readings of the binary (e.g., Butler, 1990, 2004; Risman, 2009). Others however, argue that undoing gender is really not undoing gender but re-doing or doing gender differently (e.g., Kelan, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 2009).

Our position is that in doing gender or doing gender differently, there is engagement in masculine and feminine scripts, where the sex category cannot be simply be ignored or undone. Messerschmidt (2009, p.86) argues 'most research on 'doing gender' has not fully incorporated how 'sex category' is an explicit facet of 'doing gender'. During most interactions 'sex' and 'gender' are indistinguishable from one another because we recognize their congruence'. His research with youths illuminates how the youths presented an easily recognized sex category but constructed gender behaviour perceived by others as incongruent for that category. One example includes masculine behaviour by girls often being devalued by peers because it was *not* performed in and through a socially perceived male body. This implies that 'a balance between perceived sex category and gender behavior is essential for validating masculinity (and femininity)' (Messerschmidt, 2009 p.86). Therefore for a woman, to do gender well or appropriately, evaluated against and accountable to, sex-category, she performs expected feminine behaviour, through a socially perceived female body. For a man, to do gender well or appropriate, evaluated against and accountable to, sex-category, he performs expected masculine behaviour, through a socially perceived male body. Here there is congruence and balance between perceived sex category and gender behaviour, and femininity (or masculinity) is validated. However, we also emphasize multiplicity in our understanding. Drawing upon Linstead and Pullen's (2006) three approaches to multiplicity in gender, we align ourselves

closer to ‘the multiplicity of the third (space)’ (p.1292), and view gender as a social and cultural practice where binaries have possibility for disruption and displacement by practices and performances which switch position. Thus, while a woman may do gender well, she may also enact multiplicity, including doing gender differently, against perceived sex category and expected gender behaviour.

Gender identities can emerge from comparison activities where male and female are perceived and positioned as alternative categories, so that belonging to one necessarily entails a discourse which highlights not-belonging to the other (Poggio, 2006). For us this forms a background to gender identity construction; a constraint against which individuals struggle, enacting multiple, simultaneous ways of doing gender. Following Davies and Harré (1990), individuals construct their gender identities through a positioning process of interaction, conversation and through difference. In doing gender, gender identities are not just cognitive, they are also physical, demonstrated by boys and girls’ bodily awareness of masculinity and femininity, through practices such as dressing and hairstyles (Davies, 1989; Poggio, 2006). The binary divide continues to have pervasive influence in constructing gender identities and in this sense can be seen as fixed and essential. At the intersection of doing gender and identity however, gender identity construction processes as contradictory, ambiguous and subversive are more indefinite, complex and paradoxical (Kondo, 1990). Doing gender is inextricably linked with individual identity construction and this intersection is a focus in this research. We contend doing gender well and reinforcing femininity (or masculinity) may be a strategy for positive identity construction. It may have different outcomes however, in certain types of work. We contend doing gender differently (through simultaneous, multiple enactments of femininity and masculinity), may afford new possibilities for unsettling gender binaries over time.

For the purposes of this research our approach to identity is one which favours more situated, processual and pluralist views. It emphasizes social embeddedness, in that we are always in the process of becoming (Watson and Harris, 1999; Bryans and Mavin, 2003). Thus identity is an ongoing achievement; an emergent, messy process of knowing oneself and others, retrospectively (Thomas and Davies, 2005; Watson and Harris, 1999). Identity is therefore emergent and mediated by the interactions between a person, their context and significant people around them as we are ‘continuously negotiating both co-operatively and in conflict with others to bring about ‘organization’’ (Watson and Harris, 1999 p.18). We set out to explore the intersection of doing gender and positive identity construction in stigmatized or dirty work, where such positive identity construction is likely to be problematic.

### **Doing Gender in Dirty Work**

Hughes (1958) used the term dirty work to refer to occupations or tasks that are likely to be viewed as undesirable or degrading. These tasks have been created by society to serve some perceived need or through structural conditions in maintaining order and control. For example, to provide services for the families of the deceased (e.g., mortician); clean the streets of litter (e.g., garbage collectors); sustain the marital bond or patriarchal family by fulfilling men’s unsatisfied sexual desires (e.g., prostitutes), or support the ‘ill’ (e.g., psychiatrists) (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). However, society marginalizes these tasks so that these occupations are stigmatized in some way (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Individuals performing these tasks are also stigmatized

and seen to personify the attributes of the dirty work, so that they become dirty workers (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999).

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) review and categorize dirty work according to the different types of taint noted by Hughes (1958), namely physical, social or moral. They draw attention to the lacuna of dirty work research in organization studies. Occupational prestige as a composite of status, power, quality of work, education and income, can depict the wide scope and variety of dirty work occupations (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). This means that there are a wide variety of occupations that can be considered dirty however, some will be viewed as dirtier than others given the occupational prestige of the occupation. The extent to which a job is considered dirty is also context specific in that it may not be considered dirty in all places for all people (Dick, 2005) and the position of an occupation as dirty work may change over time. Further, the aspects of an occupation that a worker considers dirty may be different from that which is perceived to be dirty by others (Dick, 2005). Considerable attention has been devoted, whether directly or indirectly, to the identity construction of dirty workers and their efforts to construct positive identities.

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) propose that dirty workers manage their 'spoiled identities' (Goffman, 1963) through negotiating the meanings attributed to the dirty work. Through minimizing, neutralizing and reframing workers strive to secure and sustain a positive identity. Drawing upon stigma management strategies (e.g., Sykes and Matza, 1957) they propose several strategies including: *reframing* which involves transforming the meaning attached to the stigmatized work by infusing the positive value or neutralizing the negative value; *recalibrating* which involves shifting the value of the job components so that more value is placed upon certain aspects of the job while minimizing the other, more tainted aspects; *refocusing* which involves redirecting attention to non-stigmatized features of the dirty so as to actively overlook the stigmatized attributes; and *social weighting* which involves actively selecting referent others from which to compare the dirty worker's job and elevate status.

Other researchers have drawn attention to the doing of gender in the construction of positive self-identities for dirty workers. Dick (2005) explores police work as dirty work and focuses her attention to the exercise of coercive authority that is a defining characteristic of policing. It is the use of coercive authority that places the work in a morally ambiguous and therefore dirty place. She highlights research that indicates that police workers, as dirty workers, in their struggle for a positive sense of self, celebrate the use of coercive authority 'via a cult of masculinity' and 'construct the police identity as 'heroic', 'moral', and 'retributive' (Van Maanen, 1980)' (Dick, 2005, p. 1371). In this sense we contend that doing gender well, that is, exaggerating expressions of masculinity facilitates the police officer's ability to manage the stigma associated with the work, re-position the work and construct positive self-identities. Scott and Tracy (2007) draw attention to the dirty work of firefighters (e.g., dealing with death and bodily fluids, dealing with individuals of low social class) and contend that one way firefighters respond to the taint associated with the work is through celebrating their manliness or masculine occupational identity. Truck captains emphasize the 'rugged manliness associated with working with a physical structure' and how it symbolizes strength and wisdom (Scott and Tracy, 2007, p.68). In addition, emphasizing physical toughness, heroism and status as a sex symbol were ways through which firefighters minimized the stigma associated with their work and their sense of



self. In this way, we argue they do gender well as a strategy to re-position their work as good work and construct positive self-identities.

Other research implies that exaggerating aspects of the work associated with masculinity or femininity is not enough, or not as easy, for some dirty workers. Doing gender well is expected in order to be a good worker however, it is not enough to re-position the work into good work (or good workers). For example, Tracy and Scott (2006) compared the efforts of firefighters and correctional officers in re-positioning their work as good work. They contend that engaging in what we theorize as exaggerated expressions of masculinity appeared to be a successful self-enhancing strategy for firefighters, but it was not enough for correctional officers. The nature of correctional officers jobs is such there is also a feminine side to the dirty work they perform (e.g., caring and clean-up) and as such there is an incongruence between their sex role category as men (and thus masculinity) performing femininity and dirty work. So for firefighters doing gender well (in this case exaggerated expressions of masculinity) was enough to re-position their work as good work (and by extension, them as good workers), but the consequences were different for correctional officers, partly because of the nature of the job and the pervasiveness nature of the binary of sex-categorization and doing gender. ‘Taint-management techniques, although perhaps intended to enhance identity, can sometimes have unintended and problematic consequences’ (Tracy and Scott, 2006, p. 8). Here we link these taint management strategies to the doing of gender.

We theorize that doing gender well then does not necessarily mean it will be enough to re-position the work and doing gender differently should also be considered. Bolton’s (2005) research on gynaecology nurses highlighted that the nurses she studied ‘celebrate their identity as ‘woman’’ (e.g., caring, nurturing) (p. 178). At the same time, they engage in multiple and even seemingly contradictory expressions of doing gender. In their doing of gender the nurses do not ‘equate with the ‘patriarchal feminine’ and they also display ‘a determination, decisiveness and sometimes apparent ruthlessness that are not associated with the ‘ideal’ woman’ (Bolton, 2005, p. 177). Further, they often have to maintain a professional face and mask their feelings, an expression of doing gender much more aligned to one of masculinity (Bolton, 2000).

In this research, we are interested in further exploring the intersections of doing gender, dirty work and identity construction to elucidate how doing gender well and differently is a complex process of identity construction with different consequences for different workers. Our particular interest is in exploring this through localized accounts from sex workers, specifically, exotic dancers.

### **Doing Gender in Exotic Dancing as Dirty Work**

We understand sex work as a form of sexual or erotic labour that entails a variety of activities including, prostitution, go-go dancing, stripping, phone sex, pornography video production and dominatrix work (Brewis and Linstead 2002; Chapkis 1997; Frenken and Sifaneck 1998; Maticka-Tyndale Lewis *et al.*, 2000; Weitzer, 2000). The sex industry includes the organizations, workers, managers, owners and customers involved in sex work (Weitzer, 2000). There has been much debate about sex-as-labour (Sanders, 2005). We recognize that there are a myriad of occupational risks that sex workers face e.g., criminality, violence, labour rights and that ‘place

sex worker on an unequal footing in relation to the economic, social and cultural practices of the mainstream labour market' (Sanders, 2005, p.321). Similar to Bruckert (2002) and Deshotels and Forsyth (2006), we place ourselves somewhere in the middle range between the sex radicals and radical feminists. For us, sex work illuminates sex as a product or service where 'business' happens (objective aspects of organizing). The position of sex work in the organizational world is a function of various political, cultural and societal considerations occurring over time (historical aspects of organizing) (Rubin, 1993). Sex work intersects sex as a product or service, where sexuality is critical, with the sexuality of organizing; that which many have argued is evident but suppressed, downplayed or neglected in organization studies (Brewis and Linstead, 2000; Fleming, 2007; Hearn and Parkin, 1987; Gherardi, 1995).

Sex work is subject to a rigid sex hierarchy so that acceptable sex (within marriage, monogamous) is at odds with the perception and realities of sex work (sex outside of marriage, commercial sex). Sex workers are therefore positioned in society as 'bad girls' who are unchaste (Kong, 2006). Within sexual politics, the category 'unchaste', 'defined as indulging in unlawful or immoral sexual intercourse; lacking in purity, virginity, decency (of speech), restraint, and simplicity; defiled (i.e. polluted, corrupted)' (Pheterson, 1996, p.65), has a disciplining effect on all women. To avoid or reject the 'whore stigma', women constantly have to convince others and themselves that they are chaste, decent, honourable and pure, and in the process their range of possible actions is constrained (Stenvoll, 2002). So sex workers face a precarious situation where doing gender accountable to sex category is expected but they are 'punished' for doing gender well. Undoubtedly, identity work will be difficult and complex for these workers.

For this research, exotic dancing is understood as a form of sex work that involves either topless or nude dancing (Wesley, 2002). Exotic dancers have been referred to and refer to themselves as strippers, entertainers, go-go dancers, lap dancers and pole dancers (Liepe-Levinson, 2002; McCaghy and Skipper, 1969; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). We are not claiming that the experience of exotic dancing is the same for all dancers, nor are we equating all forms of sex work. Brewis and Linstead (2000) draw attention to the differences across the sex industry and even within particular localities. Weitzer (2000) also notes that the term 'sex work' is often used to over generalize without acknowledging differences between and within categories of sex work. For example, within exotic dancing there are a variety of contexts in which workers may be expected to work (e.g., no contact / contact, topless only / fully nude, self-employed or not) (Dragu and Harrison 1988; Weitzer 2000). Even organizations that offer seemingly similar services will still likely have different organizational cultures and individuals will experience these environments uniquely.

Exotic dancing clubs have a long history in the United States however, it was the mid 1990s when topless dancing clubs emerged in the UK (Bindel, 2004). In the United States and Canada the number of strip clubs increased substantially in the 1980s and 1990s (Bruckert, 2002; Liepe-Levinson, 2002). There are presently more than 150 clubs legally operating throughout the UK (Bindel, 2004) with lap dancing as 'one of the fastest growing areas in Britain's sex industry' (Lap Dancing Contest Cancelled, 2001, cited in Bindel, 2004). This growth, has been met with controversy and confusion from regulatory bodies (e.g., granting and monitoring of licenses varies across municipalities), religious groups, women's rights groups (e.g., Object) and organizing bodies (e.g., International Union of Sex Workers, GMB – Britain's General Union).

In what has been considered the first in-depth study of exotic dancing clubs in the UK, Julie Bindel's (2004) report, *Profitable Exploits: Lap Dancing in the UK*, was commissioned by the Glasgow City Council to explore the nature of these clubs in the UK. Bindel's (2004) research presents exotic dancing in a rather one-dimensional way by concentrating upon the objectification of women. Bindel however, does note that further research is needed to understand the industry, the owners, legislation, enforcement and workers. There is limited research on this growing industry in the UK, yet it is an area rich with organizational issues. Opportunities exist to study issues of gender, health and safety, training, HR, employment protection, tenure, turnover, career development, and identity.

Exotic dancing can be viewed as a form of dirty work (Hughes, 1958) in that it is physically tainted (e.g., in contact with bodily fluids through dancers using the same stage and poles to do tricks without cleaning between sets); socially tainted (e.g., working with 'sleazy' men in dangerous areas of cities) and morally tainted (e.g., associated with bad sex, public sex, sex outside marriage, not associated with love, commercialization of sex). Thompson and Harred (1992, p. 292) note, 'a person's occupation is one of the most important elements of his or her personal and social identity...consequently, individuals often make a number of judgments about others based upon preconceived notions about particular occupations.' They describe techniques employed by exotic dancers to manage the marginalized position of the work, their identities, and the blurring between professional and private identities as a result of the work they perform. Thompson and Harred (1992) note that exotic dancers will often reframe their job as a form of entertainment, therapy (e.g., by allowing clients to act out their fantasies), or education, (as society becomes more comfortable with nudity and bodies), in an attempt to present their work as legitimate in some way. They also note various other strategies employed by dancers including: denying of injury (Sykes and Matza, 1957); social comparisons between and within groups (e.g., othering to those selling narcotics); condemning the condemners (Sykes and Matza, 1957); and, appealing to higher loyalties (Sykes and Matza, 1957). Overall, Thompson and Harred (1992) highlight the stigma management strategies of exotic dancers but not how the doing of gender is intertwined with this.

Other research on exotic dancers does consider the gendered aspect of doing exotic dancing, and sex work in general as dirty work. Enck and Preston (1988) use Goffman's (1959, p.18) 'cynical performance' to emphasize the instrumental and deliberate nature of the techniques employed by waitress-dancers at a topless club to secure sales of alcohol and table dances. These cynical performances involve exaggerated expressions of doing gender. Although Enck and Preston (1988) do not position their work through a feminist or gender perspective, they explore how dancers enhance the believability of their counterfeit intimacy, the cues of a successful performance through customers' reactions, and how the organization intervenes in the construction of appropriate feeling rules. Similarly, Boles and Garbin (1974), Chapkis (1997), Ronai and Ellis (1989) and Wood (2000) highlight how dancers manage impressions through costume, make-up, facial expressions, body movements, music choices for stage shows and conversations with customers. Researchers have also explored the disciplining of the body as an instrument of power via traditional gender rules, that is, what is seen as attractive by customers (e.g., thin, large breasts), as well as a tool of management control (Frank, 2002; Maticka-Tyndale *et al.*, 2000).

While acknowledging that labour power, in particular sexual labour, is a gendered phenomenon, Sanders (2005) argues that sex workers are more than sexual objects who are the passive recipients of male demands. Sanders (2005) focuses upon the agency (whilst not naming it agency), in the emotional labour performed by a group of sex workers and focuses on how sex workers construct 'manufactured identities' (p. 319) to manipulate male sexuality and sexual desire and as a resistance strategy to 'control' their workplace. Moreover, both Bruckert (2002) and Wood (2000) in their research on exotic dancers illuminate the emotional labour of sex work, the gendered nature of sex work and the stigma enveloping the industry and the individuals performing the work. Like Sanders (2005), they posit the intersections between power, resistance and identity as multi-dimensional and relational, whereby gendered norms are constructed, sustained and challenged.

Building upon research to date, we theorize that doing gender well, is important and expected in exotic dancing and sex work in general but it is still not enough to reposition this dirty work as good work. We also contend that exotic dancers may do gender well but also differently in their efforts to manage the stigma associated with the work and construct positive self-identities.

## **Methodology**

This research is a part of a larger exploratory project on identity at work undertaken by the second author. The exploratory nature of the theoretical development, data collection and analysis provided the opportunity to revise the data through a doing gender perspective. A social constructivist approach was adopted for this research. Social constructivist is understood as a perspective whereby individuals continually construct and negotiate to make sense of experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Schwandt, 2000). Those around us and specific historical, cultural, social and political contexts inform these constructions. Social constructivism adopts a relativist ontology through which local and specific, multiple, constructed realities emerge (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). However, by acknowledging specific historical, cultural and political contexts informing construction we adopt a position that takes account of material effects produced by these specificities (e.g., stigma). We are sensitive to the consequences of performing such work for our participants (e.g., job insecurity, withdrawal, violence). Our social constructivist perspective sees doing gender and identity construction as situated, social and relational practices which recognize the ontological importance of human agency and interaction processes (Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, 2009).

### *The Researcher as Researched*

We approach our research as co-constructors of the 'realities' we re-present. In this way, the stories re-presented result from our interpretations (based upon our own reflexive practice) of the individual experiences expressed by those involved in the research (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Thomas and Davies, 2005). Both researchers are white, heterosexual women, working as organization and business studies academics. Brewis (2005) argues organization studies largely ignores the biographies of those who contribute to it, yet we are all 'marked' by the research we do and our life experiences often play a role in the direction of our research. She (2005) contends research on sex work in organization studies is particularly likely to be subject to 'signing' where others construct identity labels laden with certain notions of sexuality and gender, as well as the

blurring of private and public boundaries. Indeed, this research has and continues to involve a significant amount of on-going reflective practice for both researchers.

In preparing for each data collection I (*second author*) was conscious of the potential power dynamics of clean-dirty and presented myself to exotic dancers as student-researcher rather than 'intellectual academic elite'. I gave considerable thought to how I physically presented myself as a woman in terms of what to wear to 'fit into' a night club. In exploring sex work as a site of study in organization studies this research became very much my own identity project. My struggles of what it is to be a 'woman' and my comfort with my own sexuality and physical presence were some of the greatest challenges I faced. I was often conscious as a woman in the club setting of feeling less attractive than the women participants. In addition, as a heterosexual 'woman' I often wondered how others, that is, dancers, customers and colleagues, perceived my sexuality because of the nature of the research. As I continue to work through writing papers from this larger project, I still struggle with my understandings of 'intimate' relations and how I live out different expectations for men and women in everyday life.

A struggle of (for) professional identity for both researchers has also been ignited by conducting research on the sex industry. This reflexive process involves unsettling our fears and biases about sex work(ers) and dirty work. What would our colleagues and students think? Does this research have value to organization studies, business and management or is it just 'quirky research'? As researchers are we tainted by the stigma of dirty work/sex work? Do we want research publications on sex work in any institutional assessment exercise? How does this research threaten each of our professional identities? This is an ongoing struggle as we present the research at conferences and for publication.

### *Case Study Research*

Brewis and Linstead (2002) and Bradley-Engen and Ulmer (2009) discuss the challenges of doing research on sex work sites. They contend that the degree the fragmentation with the sex industry, the controversy around commercial sex, the difficulty in getting access to establishments and sex workers, and the challenge of developing rapport with those in stigmatized populations make studying sex work difficult. It requires substantial time, energy, cost and even luck. As a result, there is still much to be learned from sex as work and in particular how studying sex work contributes to our understanding of management and organization studies more broadly (Brewis and Linstead, 2002).

The research strategy for this project was case study (Stake, 2000). We explored the experiences of exotic dancers employed in a chain of gentlemen's clubs in the UK. Gentlemen's clubs are seen to be unique in comparison to other exotic dancing organizations and can 'serve as a vehicle through which stripping will become less deviant' (Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997, p.130). These clubs occupy a position of exclusivity and attempt to present exotic dancing establishments as professional, legitimate, law-abiding businesses, as do the dancers who work in these clubs (Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997; Mestemacher and Roberti, 2004). At the time of data collection, there were five *For Your Eyes Only (FYEO)* clubs operating under the ownership of the Ladhar Group. With more than a decade of operations in the UK industry, in a context of controversy from various interest groups, there were visible efforts of the club to present itself as a professional, leisure-based business, rather than a form of sex work (e.g., see

website [www.fyeo.co.uk](http://www.fyeo.co.uk) for marketing of the clubs). The clubs' marketing efforts to distinguish itself from competitors (e.g., policies of escorting customers to their seats, tableside bar service, elaborate and comfortable surroundings, no contact policy for both dancers and clients, and escorting dancers to their cars after a shift) can be viewed as deliberate attempts to manage the stigma associated with the industry. In doing this, these efforts serve as a resource for identity construction (to make it less dirty) but also enforce specific expected expressions of doing gender on dancers. In this way, studying dancers employed at FYEO offered an interesting opportunity to explore how individuals do gender and manage spoiled identities.

The second researcher had no contacts in the sex industry and had little awareness of the number of establishments, location or structure of exotic dancing in the UK. The decision to focus primarily upon dancers and managers working at *FYEO* was partly based upon its structure as a chain of gentlemen's clubs in various UK locations. This provided access to a number of potential participants, working under *similar* arrangements. The willingness of one of the club manager's, Terry, in allowing the second author to visit the club, give introductions to the dancers, interview him, and place her on the guest list influenced the decision to use *FYEO* as a continued site. The relationship established with Terry, coupled with some discouraging incidents experienced with other managers, often influenced even when data was collected (e.g., nights when Terry was working).

### *Methods*

Theoretical development, data collection and analysis occurred in an iterative manner (Mason, 2002; McCracken, 1988). The larger project drew upon a variety of secondary (e.g., corporate documents, news coverage of *FYEO*, media analysis of exotic dancing industry) and primary data (e.g., observation, pole dancing course, interviews). This research focuses upon semi-structured interviews with dancers. Interviews were used to gain rich accounts from dancers and managers willing to participate. Similar to the approach adopted by Coupland (2001), individuals were asked to talk about work in general to explore how identity making emerged through the discussion, rather than imposing identity-specific questions upon participants. This exploratory process enabled various other issues to surface (e.g., doing gender, organizational structure, culture). All interviews were conducted at the clubs, often in the dressing rooms, just before opening times, right at opening time, and between dances or stage shows. The dressing room setting for interviews was challenging due to interruptions and distractions (e.g., loud music, other conversations). The close proximity of the men managers may have also imposed pressure for discretion or restricted dancers' willingness to be more open when responding to some questions (e.g., role of the housemother, relationship with managers). In total 24 participants were formally interviewed in a semi-structured format, 21 (women) dancers and 3 (men) managers. We have used pseudonyms for all dancers. The dancers interviewed had varied experience in the industry (e.g., tenure, national / international experience, fully nude / topless only experience). Table 1 provides additional information on the dancers.

The semi-structured interview guide drew upon broad themes of work experiences (McCracken, 1988), many of which were areas covered by other studies on sex work and exotic dancers specifically (e.g., motivations, strategies to secure dancers, relationships with others) (e.g., Boles and Garbin, 1974; Bruckert, 2002; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997; Frenken and Sifaneck, 1998; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). Analysis took place through 'rummaging'

(McCracken, 1988); reading and re-reading transcriptions to categorize content. Each interview transcript was analysed individually using initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2000) and text sorted into broad themes. This was followed by a process of reinterpretation focusing upon how individuals defined their work and themselves in particular ways. Finally, a process of constant comparison across themes and interview transcripts was performed.

-----INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE-----

## **Doing Gender Well**

Through our analysis we focus on the intersections of doing gender, dirty work and identity construction, highlighting how, when doing gender, exotic dancers struggle to construct self-enhancing favourable identities. The research reveals a number of interrelated identity roles whereby the exotic dancers we encountered engage in doing gender in dirty work and construct positive identities, simultaneously positioning themselves as good and bad workers, performing clean and dirty work. We acknowledge that individuals can simultaneously enact multiple, overlapping and contradictory identity roles and that these roles are fluid. We contend that the identity roles illustrate that these dirty dancers do gender well by conforming to expected expressions of femininity, but also do gender differently through enacting multiple and contradictory expressions of femininity and masculinity.

In retelling stories about their work, similar to other service-based occupations, these dancers are expected to display strong interpersonal, adaptability and intuitive abilities to identify and address the varied needs of clients. In addition, the dancers address the gendered expectations of physical appearance and sexual performance of an exotic dancer. They exert great efforts in doing gender, presenting exaggerated forms of expected feminine behaviour through personified female bodies within the gender scripts they enact. Their stories reveal doing gender through exaggerated sex category and gender balance, so that theirs is an expected and extreme validation of femininity and their female sex, as they are tied to embedded social codes of being a woman. Gendered performances require the dancers to be constantly conscious of their bodies and engage in various activities to meet a particular 'feminine' aesthetic. Bodily appearance and behaviour is moulded to personify doing gender; exuding sexuality, desire, sex and femininity within established gender scripts.

In this research, women sex workers doing gender well through exaggerated feminine behaviours and personified sexual bodies, are continually rewarded by higher customer demand, more dances, higher wage earning and customer satisfaction. As in other customer service organizations, these outcomes signify perceptions of the worker as being good at their work and a good worker (Lewis, 2006; Ronai and Ellis, 1989). The social validation of femininity in this context can therefore also be seen as economic. Our findings are well supported in the extant literature on exotic dancing (e.g., Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, 2009; Lewis, 2006; Philaretou, 2006; Ronai and Ellis, 1989). The dancers in this study spoke of how they do gender well and through their experiences illuminate the intertwining of sex category and gender processes in doing gender. Clients, typically men are assumed to be heterosexual, and the clubs expect dancers to act out gender scripts to ensure an 'authentic' gendered performance. While clients are not the focus of this research, men clients and managers also play out particular gender

scripts in their interactions with the dancers. Erickson and Tewksbury (2000) describe the gentlemen's club as 'ultra-masculine' where 'men enact roles and engage in impression management based on their personal conceptions of socio-cultural expectations for masculinity' (p. 289). In responding to this, an important element of a dancer's job is to develop rapport with clients. The ability to ascertain the desires of a client is integral to a successful earnings strategy. Many clients are not only interested in the physicality of a dancer they also have gendered expectations of good conversation (e.g., stereotypical feminine traits as interpersonal, social, friendly, attentive, approachable) and the attention of a 'young' woman. As women's work, dancers receive a 'fee' for providing men with a nurturing, caring and supporting context (Bruckert, 2002).

Michelle has been dancing for two years and presently dances at *FYEO* and another competing club. She describes how a dancer's ability to be sensitive to the 'social' needs of clients can sometimes be more important than their physical appearance. 'I know six foot, busty supermodel style, long blonde hair, absolutely gorgeous and then less attractive ones earn far more money because of the things they've said...being seductive, some girls are like more sexy than others even though they might be less attractive'. Alex has been dancing for one year and she notes that many clients do not frequent the Club for dancing, rather 'some men want a chat, they may be here for business and they're bored sat in their hotel room so they come in for a chat and a drink.' These dancers need to be able to judge very quickly the desires of clients and perform to meet the gendered expectations. This emotional labour (equated with femininity and women's work) of exotic dancing has been well documented in the extant literature, with Deshotels and Forsyth (2006) referring to this emotional labour in exotic dancing as 'strategic flirting'.

The club regulates the performance of suitable interpersonal skills through explicit house rules outlining how gender should be done. Appropriate facial expressions, topics of conversation and behaviours are prescribed and enforced to ensure an 'authentic' performance of doing gender, rewarded by successful transactions. Dancers' interpersonal skills are especially important in performing sit-downs. Participants indicated that this is a good way to earn money. A client expects the dancer to capture his attention during what might be several hours at a time.

The dancers also talked of how they know when they are not performing gender well which is again validated in economic terms. Sheena, a dancer of one year at *FYEO*, said,

Because maybe it's just not your night, you know if you're not on the ball, on form, because you're not going to make money. If you've had a shit day and you're all upset and you go round to the customer and say do you want a dance, he's not going to say yes. So sometimes you don't even realise you're not on form.

It follows that when these dancers are not doing gender well in this context there are negative consequences. In terms of their motivation to dance and perform gender well, thus achieving higher customer demand, the dancers in this study were explicit in their drive for economic reward and increased earnings. As noted by Ronai and Ellis (1989) the exotic dancer's 'overall goal remained fairly consistent – money with no hassle' (p.282). This ambition and drive even led to explicit competition amongst the dancers in our research. As such we contend that this drive aligns much more with notions of masculinity, rather than femininity. So while enacting



exaggerated expressions femininity, albeit, in different ways for different clients, these dancers also engage in expressions of masculinity. This is similar to the nurses studied by Bolton (2000, 2005) who express femininity as caring and nurturing but also display determination and even ruthlessness not associated with the 'ideal' woman. In this way, these dancers do gender in multiple ways, some of which align with expectations of sex category, while others do not - here we begin to see how they do gender differently, even while doing gender well.

Physical appearance and performance of sex category is integral to doing gender well in exotic dancing. Dancers' bodies are the 'products on sale,' are consumed in sex work, as they do gender, performing gender scripts of men's sexual fantasies in the club. The gendered scripts as manifested through dancer's bodywork (e.g., wearing make-up, styled hair, specific clothes, tanned bodies, and toned physique) portray a somewhat narrow depiction of 'femininity'. Participants of our study 'learn to embody the self. In other words, both consciously and subconsciously, to present their bodies, behaviours and self-image' (Haynes, 2008 p.333) as exotic dancers. Alex explains that you have to look like a real woman,

You basically physically you got to look, you can't be overweight obviously, you don't have to be stick skinny either, you have to look like a real woman. As long as you're not out of shape and you have to be able to at least be able to move to the music on stage.

While Trina, who has been dancing for only four weeks, spoke of having to lose weight to physically fit the image,

They hold open auditions every Tuesday and Thursday every week, so the first audition I didn't get...I was told to lose some weight so I came back two weeks later, lost weight and they called me back for another audition.

There are high expectations that these dancers' performance of body movement align with heterosexual male fantasy. This is underpinned by an assumption that heterosexual desire is uniform, at least in this context. The dancers report clients have different interests, yet the expectations portray a very narrow depiction of heterosexual desire. This occurs to such an extent that performance of bodywork takes on a parody-like enactment of heterosexuality. Within this context Sam, a dancer and instructor of pole dancing classes, talks of having to construct a sexual person to go on stage because otherwise she felt she was too relaxed to 'turn on' a guy,

It's not that I put on a role that I'm trying to hide from it all, it's just that being me probably wouldn't... I don't feel I turn on a guy particularly, I'm too relaxed and too easy going. They're there to fantasize, so you kind of pan it to them a little bit, oh you've got a lovely shirt and you look really nice, you won't mean it you know and you've got your stage name and you just kind of form a sexual person. Although not overly you know.

In doing gender well, there is further expectation to dress in a certain way while dancing. These dancers buy clothes through independent dressmakers designed specifically for dancing. Many of these dancers changed outfits throughout the night, matching clothes to stage shows they perform or to stimulate interest in clients. They were very conscious of their weight, physical fitness and

age in presenting themselves to clients and colleagues. *FYEO*'s expectations of dancers to conform to gendered cultural expectations in terms of dress, body and performance is similar, albeit not necessarily identical, to organizations in general. Indeed, 'Kerfoot (1999), proposes, there is a tendency within organizations to view the competency of a manager in his or her ability to display the body in a manner that is culturally acceptable to their organization's bodily code in terms of dress and physical appearance' (Haynes, 2008, p.335). Exotic dancers do gender well by moulding themselves and their re-presentation of femininity to create an 'ideal woman' to appeal to a client (Murphy, 2003). Swann (2005) argues that many feminist studies of organization demonstrate the way in which women in general have to manage their femininity to fine degrees – 'just the right amount of lippy, just the amount of leg, just the right amount of hair (Silverstri, 2003)' (p.319).

### **Exotic Dancers Constructing Positive Identities: Intersections of Doing Gender, Identity Construction and Dirty Work**

We have conceptualized that doing gender well is doing gender appropriately. This occurs as congruence between perceived sex category and gender behaviour, and in accounting to sex category (which in this research is femininity) (Messerschmidt, 2009). If exotic dancers perform gender well and are economically rewarded for their performances, we have argued in one sense they can be perceived as good workers. We have also argued that for some dirty workers, performing exaggerated expressions of doing gender is not enough to re-position the work as good, clean or honourable. This is the case for these dancers. Even when they do gender well (and are thus good workers) they are still perceived to be bad girls doing dirty work.

Our research set out to explore the intersections of doing gender, dirty work and the construction of positive self identities with an aim of elucidating the doing of gender well and differently (through complexity and multiplicity). Our position here is that individuals can enact multiple, overlapping, intertwined, contradictory and simultaneous identity roles which are not stable and fixed but fluid. The exotic dancers in our study have outlined how they do gender well, but in exploring the intersections our dancers may also enact multiplicity in this doing of gender, enacting various other strategies or enacting other femininities and masculinities.

#### *Balancing Freedom and Oppression: The Exploited and Empowered*

As the dancers in our study talk about their work they describe (directly and indirectly) the struggle to balance the freedom and empowerment afforded by the work with the risk of entrapment and feelings of exploitation and oppression that accompany it. On the one hand, dancing and doing gender well provide an outlet to financial and sexual freedom, a kind of emancipation. On the other hand, this freedom is bound by economic and social arrangements that restrict individual expression of feelings, thoughts and ideas. This can be seen as a form of entrapment whereby the individual becomes stuck in the industry with few alternative employment opportunities yielding comparable income.

Freedom re-presents the opportunity to do and be otherwise, whether in a material sense, through increased earnings and additional leisure time, or in an emotional or ideological sense, through developing a sense of control, self-determination or a different understanding of one's own being. Exotic dancing can be a means to a better lifestyle where the money earned generates

greater independence and control over one's life. The nature of the employment contract at *FYEO* is such that these dancers are considered self-employed, a type of 'private entrepreneur' (Lewis, 2006). These dancers express that this is a means of expressing choice; they choose when they want to work, how often they want to work and where they want to work – within boundaries. According to Maggie, who has been dancing for a year in other locations and countries, it provides a sense of control that other employment opportunities do not however, she notes there are limits to this 'freedom.' 'We tell them when we want to work. It's not the other way around. So we're in charge - to a certain extent'.

Flexible working arrangements are attractive for those with other life commitments. Rona, for example, is completing a science degree and this means she has little time to commit to the structure required in most jobs. 'I couldn't fit a normal job around it (university studies) so I did hostessing for a while, but I really didn't like that so I thought I might as well give dancing a try'. Dancing for these participants also serves as a means to achieve other life objectives. Sam indicates dancing is used as a 'stepping stone' and as a 'a good way to earn money very quickly and you might set up your own business when you're finished or buy a property or something and you know pay your debts off'. Both Amy and Anna also describe how dancing enables them to travel to other countries, something they otherwise would not have been able to do. These dancers emphasize these aspects of the work to draw attention to the positive opportunities available to them by working as an exotic dancer. In turn, this focus allows them to minimize the stigmatized aspects of the work they perform and the stigma associated with their occupational identities.

While the increased income assures them the lifestyle they want, this self-employment and financial independence remains under the control of the Club and management. Freedom is, in many respects, defined by the Club. The house rules indicate the amount of house fees to be paid by dancers each evening and the payment procedure. The fees charged by clubs vary and some clubs can take up to one half of a dancer's earnings in an evening. The income earned by these dancers is not uniform across workers and there is no real mechanism in the system for dancers to challenge or contest the calculation of required house fees determined by management. Sometimes these dancers are unable to pay the fee at the shift end and management allows them to pay it next shift – the only allowance given in the determination or payment of fees. The self-employed arrangements mean low labour costs for *FYEO*, but it also grants clubs the control and authority to impose a variety of rules upon the dancers.

The dancers in our research describe how dancing entails a period of self-discovery for some, whereby they reflect upon their own sexuality and the sexuality of others. The reflections open up new possibilities of being for the individual, which further complicate an already messy process of identity construction. While the dancers enacted doing gender well through exaggerated femininity and sexuality, some told us of the liberating effect of this doing gender. Michelle's decision to start dancing was ignited by her interests in studying art and sexual psychology, an interesting route to experience life and discover herself, as well as a means through which she could avail of other opportunities such as travelling.

Stripping has completely changed my life. I knew it would, but I mean when I first started like there was just an amazing like self discovery kind of thing. I learnt so much about myself, so much about men, so much about like everything really. I completely changed my thoughts on everything good and bad. Apart from being more confident and less ashamed or embarrassed *or* trying to cover your body up in swimming on beaches or at the gym, now I just go around naked and I absolutely think nothing of it. You know I've been like harassed and shouted at and followed things like that. You just know how to handle it basically. I feel really strong, really above men, before I didn't feel like that at all. It's a really hard subject because there's so many different circumstances. So many different like situations you know that are different and sometimes you will feel good as a woman, sometimes you feel bad, sometimes you will feel degraded, sometimes you will feel like you have been put on a pedestal.

Michelle's comments illustrate the complexity of working on her sense of self and highlight how she simultaneously positions herself as empowered and exploited; positively embodied while oppressed as a sex-object. A good woman and a bad woman; degraded and revered, as she struggles to understand herself inside dirty work and outside. Her experiences in her stigmatized dirty work life transfer into her private life. In many ways she embraces this process. Michelle comments that she is far more confident inside and outside work and more comfortable with herself, both physically and emotionally. Her focus upon the life experiences afforded through dancing infuses positive value to the work, while de-emphasizing the stigmatized elements of the work. Through dancing she achieves a greater understanding and appreciation of her body, her relationships with others and her experiences as a woman are intensified, challenged and revealed. For Michelle, there is value to the individual dancer in regards to increased confidence and pushing personal boundaries, by confronting embedded norms of what is it to be a woman, and through increasing society's comfort with women's bodies. At the same time however, she acknowledges the challenging and gendered nature of her work that comes with new possibilities. Dancing, for these participants, offers opportunities to construct self-enhancing identities, but this is a complicated and messy process.

Several dancers talked of how clients often assume they are prostitutes (none of the dancers presented themselves as prostitutes and made great efforts to separate themselves from prostitution) and ask questions like 'where can I meet yah, do you do extras?' as expressed by Lesley, a dancer who has worked in a variety of establishments. Tian and Maggie are both university students, dancing while they finish their studies. They both indicate men view and treat them differently once they know they are 'strippers'. Maggie notes, 'you do get male attention sometimes for the wrong reasons'. Barton (2002) notes that most people are informed only by cultural stereotypes and form perceptions of dancers as not very bright, who sleep with clients, have predatory sexual power, are seductive and manipulative, or as selfless mothers supporting children or driven by thieving, drug-addicted ex-husbands. The participants express that they think society and men in particular feel dancers are disgusting and dirty because of the work they perform.

Our research challenges the notion that exotic dancing can only be experienced as exploitation, as 'dancers are both controlled and controlling' (Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, 2009). Bruckert's

(2002) and Deshotels and Forsyth's (2006) research also challenge the dichotomous view of exotic dancing as either exploitative or empowering. In a similar way, in this research we contend that the situation is more dialectical than dichotomous. Further, the contradictions that emerge through the experiences of these dancers illustrate the multiplicity of doing gender and identity construction for some dirty workers. The dancers are empowered through their expressions of femininity, but also disempowered by being objectified. This multiplicity represents doing gender well but also doing gender differently.

#### *Other Expressions of Multiplicity in Doing Gender through Identity Construction*

In addition to dancers' efforts to balance being empowered and exploited, there are various other ways through which dancers do gender differently through identity construction. They emphasize temporality and in doing so construct themselves as a temp in comparison to career-based dancers, or lifers. They also emphasize acceptable levels of nudity in constructing themselves as a good girl and professional, in comparison to the dirty dancer. These efforts are only discussed briefly here.

Given the social position of exotic dancing as low status and dirty, dancers in our study use time as a moderator of their place in the sex-industry. Temporality emerges through tenure of the job, as well as change in and around the industry. Dancers' physicality, career plans, and the novelty of the job all play a role in tenure. Many of these dancers construct a distinction between their work as a temporary dancer and their 'real' career aspirations, thereby positioning dancing as less serious, less important, and less permanent work. The dancers negotiate a hierarchy of reasons to justify dancing. Those with a 'legitimate' reason for dancing are viewed more positively than those dancers that consider it a long-term choice. We interpret these career aspirations as expressions of ambition, associated with notions of masculinity. Further, their efforts to remove themselves from dancing as women's work can be viewed as resisting the expected expressions of femininity that as women, in and outside of work, are expected to conform.

Some of these dancers who work while finishing their studies construct differences between themselves as temps and those who dance full-time (full-time, permanent job). Most of these student-dancers emphasize they are working only to fund their education, thus deeming it a legitimate reason; they do not intend to stay dancing once they finished their degrees. Dancing is re-presented as a means through which a better education can be achieved, thus infusing positive value in the work. These dancers draw attention to the temporary nature of the job, thereby minimizing the stigma associated with their decision to dance. It is acceptable only for a short while and for a good reason. Most student-dancers here do express a desire to justify and draw comparisons in order to set themselves apart from other dancers. Tian emphasizes she is only dancing while she is a student and intends to quit once she is finished. Denise has only been dancing for four months and she comments that dancers move on to other things once they finish their degrees. 'A lot of them came up because they were studying here. Then once they've finished at uni or whatever they go back home, they just leave.' In this way, dancers do gender well through femininity but if it is only for a short period of time or to achieve more substantive (ambitious, masculine) goals, then it is acceptable. This contradiction we argue illustrates the complexity of doing gender, in effect demonstrating how these dancers do gender differently.

Several of the non-student dancers also indicate that they too are only dancing for a short period of time. Some indicate that they have plans to go to university in the near future. Both Nancy and Ivy note they might continue to dance to finance school in the future but dancing is not something they plan to do for a long time. Nancy started at *FYEO* as a waitress first and later moved into dancing. Ivy has been dancing for more than two years and has worked at other *FYEO* locations. Others emphasize the temporality of their employment to serve as a means to travel (e.g., Anna, Michelle), save money for future investments (e.g., Anna, Lesley), and pay off bills (e.g., Frankie, Ronnie) to separate themselves from other dancers with different goals. Through injecting positive value upon their work, dancers deflect the stigma associated with dirty work to others. Moreover, through social weighting (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) by career aspirations / tenure in the industry, these dancers elevate their status relative to career-based dancers. As Lana, a dancer of four years, notes, 'I think for a lot of people this job is a means to an end. It's not something that could be permanent. I think there's the odd case where people haven't got things they want to do. But most of the time it's almost like a stop off'. Even though Lana is unsure how long she will stay in the industry, she expresses certainty in that it will not be permanent. In doing this, she separates herself from those that view exotic dancing as a career.

Mestemacher and Roberti (2004) and Philaretou (2006) discuss the goal-oriented or transient dancer and career dancer. Mestemacher and Roberti (2004) contend that goal-oriented dancers, referred to here as the temp, have choice and are temporarily involved in dancing, usually as a means through which to meet another goal (e.g., career in entertainment, financing education). The career dancer has less choice and she is often involved in dancing as a means of economic survival (Mestemacher and Roberti, 2004). In constructing and drawing upon the temporality of the dirty work as a means to rationalize their position in the sex-industry, the dancers in our study construct life time or career dancers as an Other – they are bad girls; viewed less favourably and lower status in the hierarchy, to those dancing to meet a specific goal or for a specified period of time. By contrast, if it is a means to an end for an exotic dancer, then is it 'legitimate' work, by good girls. So while both lifers and temps, are doing gender as prescribed by expected norms of femininity, temps position themselves as superior to the lifer and in doing so highlight their ambition, drive and business-like approach to the work (masculinity) – thus doing gender differently.

Here exotic dancers have shown how they do gender well through their performance of exaggerated sexuality and femininity. They also use the extent of nudity that they, or others, deem acceptable as a means through which to construct separate private and public selves and to separate themselves from others in the whore stigma, dirty work, sex and sex industry hierarchies. The extent of nudity is used as a criterion for determining the image of the club and its position in the sex-industry hierarchy. Some dancers emphasize the topless-only rule as an indicator of the upscale nature of the job and the club – more professional. For some, underwear serves as a psychological barrier that allows them to separate 'topless-only' as 'not sex' and 'not intimate' exposure of their body, from sex or intimacy, which entails full nudity. Nudity is reserved for private relationships outside of work. In this way, they construct identities as a good girl (innocent, faithful).

Some of these dancers indicate they would not dance at a fully nude establishment. For example, Lesley describes topless-only dancing as ‘more money... more classy because you don’t take your bottoms off’ than fully nude dancing, distinguishing it in status from other forms of sex work. This distancing is also achieved through transferring disgust to other fellow dancers. These dancers express real contempt for dirty dancers and draw a clear distinction between appropriate dancing (e.g., non-contact) and inappropriate dancing (e.g., contact, extra services). Ronai and Cross (1998) also discuss the efforts of dancers to construct deviance and sleaze in managing the stigma associated with the work they perform.

These dancers do gender well but this sits simultaneously alongside doing gender differently as they re-position their work as legitimate and professional (masculine) work. Fully nude by comparison gets positioned as unprofessional and the taint again shifts from topless-only to other fully nude dancing and dancers.

### **The Good and Bad Girls Doing Gender in Dirty Work**

For these dancers, doing gender and positive identity construction in the context of exotic dancing as dirty work is complex. These dancers’ struggle to construct favourable identities takes place within complex gendered, dirty work and sex-industry hierarchies. Within this study, exotic dancers’ efforts to establish positive identities within stigmatized work have been represented as interrelated, often simultaneous and contradictory identity roles. This we contend illustrates how dancers do gender well and do gender differently.

Here we emphasize the *exploited* identity role as the basis of others, recognizing patriarchal power relations and prevailing sexist order. Moreover, the very premise of dancing/gentlemen’s clubs is gendered from the start, providing adult entertainment for men seeking women’s performances (Price, 2008) The identity roles of the *empowered*, the *temp*, the *good girl*, and the *professional* are self-enhancing, favourable identities constructed by exotic dancers as they position themselves differently. We consider these identity roles the *good girls in dirty work* as our dancers distance themselves from the stigma attached to their work and re-position themselves favourably. Our dancers construct ‘barriers’ to separate themselves from the Other. The Good Girl is constructed to align with societal expectations about morality, fidelity and loyalty, while at the same time constructing space for certain types of acceptable commercial ‘sexual’ display, positioned as *higher* status to other sex work[ers]. In this way, dancers are doing gender well but in simultaneously enacting multiple and even contradictory expressions of femininity and masculinity, they are doing gender differently.

The *bad girls in dirty work*, reflecting the *lifer* and *dirty dancer* identity roles, become the Other as a result of this separation. The Other exotic dancer is positioned closer to the taint and stigmatization associated generally with sex work[ers], underpinning a gendered hierarchy of good and bad girls. In exploring their positioning in the sex hierarchy, to avoid or reject the ‘whore stigma’ (Pheterson, 1996), the good girl exotic dancers have to convince others and themselves that to some extent they are chaste, decent, honourable and pure (Stenvoll, 2002). Michelle epitomized this simultaneous distancing from bad and attachment to good when she said ‘sometimes you will feel good as a woman (*empowered*), sometimes you feel bad

(*exploited*)... sometimes you will feel degraded (*bad-exploited*), sometimes you will feel like you have been put on a pedestal (*good-empowered*)’.

In dirty stigmatized work, doing gender well may not be enough to re-position the work as good work. This means doing gender well in dirty work will have different consequences for different types of work. In addition, this research highlights how, given the complexities of doing dirty work (sex work as dirty work and bad sex) dancers will do gender well and differently, simultaneously – thus illuminating more clearly how doing gender well and doing gender differently requires further study as it pertains to dirty work and other work in general. At the same time, we are not concluding that the experiences of the dancers we study reflect the experiences of all exotic dancers or sex workers.

We also recognize that through this research we have raised and perhaps inadequately problematized a number of binaries, including: masculinity/femininity, good/bad work, good/bad workers, good/bad organizations, good/bad girls, good/bad sex, good/bad research, and good/bad researchers. This places us in a vulnerable position for critique. With regards to the binary divide, we do believe it constrains and restricts how these dancers (and ourselves) do gender. However, following Kondo (1990) we argue that the binary divide continues to have pervasive influence and in doing so, can be seen as fixed and essential, while doing gender and identity construction processes are more complex, contradictory, fluid and indefinite. By talking and struggling with this binary divide (and other binaries) we begin to surface opportunities for multiplicity and over time an unsettling of our taken for granted assumptions about doing gender in organizations.

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**Table 1. Participant Profile of Dancers**

<b>Name for Research Purposes</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Period of Time as a Dancer</b>	<b>Previous Experience</b>	<b>Expected Duration in Industry</b>	<b>Formal Interview</b>	<b>Informal Interview</b>
Maggie	20	1 yr	Danced in other establishments – e.g. Birmingham / Ibiza	1-2 years (until finished university program)	Group (of three)	Two occasions
Tian	20	6 mths	Only at present location	1 –2 years (until finished university program)	Group (of three)	Two occasions
Ivy	22	2.5 yrs	Danced in other establishments – e.g. London	1 year (in later interview indicated 6 mths more)	Group (of three)	Three occasions
Lana	25	4 yrs	Danced in other establishments – various (started by stripping)	Unsure but not permanently	Group (of three)	None
Carrie	20	1 yr	Danced in other establishments – e.g. Paris, Birmingham	3 years	Group (of three)	One occasion
Lesley	23	6 yrs	Danced in other establishments – various (started by stripping)	Unsure – not permanently	Group (of three)	Four occasions
Sam	25	2.5 yrs	Danced in other establishments – only FYEO	Unsure – not permanently	Individual	None
Ronnie	24	2 mths	Only at present location	3 mths	Group (of two)	One occasion
Lisa	25	7 mths	Only at present location	Unsure – until she had saved £10,000	Group (of two)	None
Anna	26	1 yr	Danced in other establishments (mostly outside England, e.g. Tokyo)	For another year to save for car and house payment (has a limit she wants to reach)	Group (of two)	None
Amy	19	8 mths	Danced in other establishments (e.g. Paris, London)	Until she finishes university	Group (of two)	None
Michelle	21	2 yrs	Danced at other establishments (e.g. Rhino and in US) and presently dancing at other places while at FYEO	8 – 10 yrs	Group (of four)	None
Angie	19	3 mths	Only at present location	As long as she is a student	Group (of four)	None
Rona	21	3 mths	Only at present location	As long as she is a student	Group (of four)	None
Karen	23	1 yr	Didn't comment	Didn't comment	Group (of four)	None
Nancy	21	14 mths	Only at present location (worked there as waitress first)	Until she goes back to university in five months	Group (of three)	One occasion
Denise	19	4.5 mths	Only at present location	As long as she is a student and while at first 'real' job	Group (of three)	One occasion
Frankie	22	4 mths	Abroad and only table dancing	Temporary to pay bills	Group (of three)	One occasion
Alex	31	1 yr	Only at present location but a professional dancer as well	Unsure	Group (of three)	One occasion
Trina	21	4 wks	Only at present location	Unsure	Group (of three)	One occasion
Sheena	27	1 yr	Only at present location	Unsure – as long as she enjoys it	Group (of three)	None