

THE EFFECTS OF LABELING AND STIGMA ON THE SOCIAL REJECTION
OF STRIPTease PERFORMERS

Omar Randi Ebeid, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

December 2006

APPROVED:

Kevin Yoder, Major Professor
Nicole Dash, Minor Professor
David A. Williamson, Committee Member and
Chair of the Department of Sociology
David W. Hartman, Dean of the College of
Public Affairs and Community Service
Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B.
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

Ebeid, Omar Randi, The Effects of Labeling and Stigma on the Social Rejection of Striptease Performers. Master of Arts (Sociology), December 2006, 55 pp., 7 tables, references, 39 titles.

This study uses survey data collected from a convenience sample of undergraduate students ($N=89$). A vignette survey design is employed to measure social rejection of striptease performers compared to a control group. Data is also collected on negative stereotypes held about striptease performers, which are correlated with social rejection. Link and Phelan's conceptualization of the stigma process provides the theoretical framework for this analysis. Findings suggest that striptease performers experience higher levels of social rejection and are perceived more negatively than the control group and that endorsement of negative stereotypes is associated with social rejection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Department of Sociology at the University of North Texas for allowing me to survey its students for this study. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Kevin Yoder for his guidance and support throughout the duration of this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction	
Theoretical Background	
Literature Review	
Summary	
2. RESEARCH METHODS	24
Purpose	
Study Design	
3. FINDINGS.....	31
Descriptive Statistics	
Bivariate Analyses	
Multivariate Analyses	
4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	39
Discussion	
Conclusion	
APPENDICES	45
REFERENCES.....	53

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. Descriptive Statistics for Social Rejection Variables.....	31
2. Descriptive Statistics for Stereotype Endorsement Variables.....	32
3. Comparisons of Central Tendencies for Social Rejection Variables between Striptease Performers and Housekeepers.....	33
4. Comparisons of Central Tendencies for Stereotype Variables between Striptease Performers and Housekeepers.....	35
5. Regression of Social Rejection Scale on Negative Perceptions Scale, Familiarity and Gender within the Experimental Group.....	36
6. Regression of Social Rejection Scale on Stereotype Endorsement Variables within the Experimental Group.....	37
7. Correlations of Rejection Scale and Stereotype Variables	38

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Striptease presents an interesting topic for sociological analysis. Striptease is a broad term meant to include several forms of nude or semi-nude performance. This analysis focuses predominately upon commercial establishments featuring nude or semi-nude female employees and catering to male patrons. Although literature exists on male striptease dancers and female patrons, this literature is sparse and for the sake of clarity is excluded from this thesis, except when cited for purposes of comparison.

This thesis attempts to examine the role of labeling in the stigmatization of this occupation particularly as it relates to social rejection within the theoretical framework of Link and Phelan's (2001) stigma process model. Numerous social factors lead to stigmatization of an occupation and its definition as deviant. Furthermore, social factors influence the likelihood of an individual entering a deviant occupation as well as the likelihood of their being stigmatized and labeled as a result. This study will attempt to test that portion of the stigma process model that links labeling to social rejection via negative stereotyping.

The first chapter provides an overview of the concept of stigma, as used in the social sciences, and outlines Link and Phelan's (2001) stigma process model. Next, a review of the existing sociological literature on striptease is provided, particularly as it relates to stigma. Chapter 2 describes the vignette survey design employed in this research. The third chapter presents the findings of this study. Chapter 4 discusses these findings and attempts to interpret the study results.

Theoretical Background

Stigma

Goffman

In his seminal work on the topic, Goffman defines stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting,” which could be a physical deformity, a negative character attribute, or a “tribal” characteristic such as race or religion (1963, 3-4). “Stigma symbols” refer to visually apparent indicators of stigmatized attributes (Goffman 1963, 43). When an individual is marked by a stigma symbol, they are considered “discredited” (Goffman, 1963, 4). Implicit in this definition is the socially constructed nature of stigma. In order to be discreditable, an attribute must be judged as negative or undesirable by society.

Assuming that the striptease industry is a stigmatized occupation, the stripper's discredited status as an employee of the club is readily apparent only when working within the club. Outside of the striptease establishment, however, dancers are not so easily identified as they rarely show any visible indicators of this status. People in this situation are termed “discreditable” meaning that the stigmatized attribute is not readily apparent through a stigma symbol, but nevertheless there is a potential that the stigmatizing attribute may be identified and that the person's appearance as a “normal” un-stigmatized person will be discredited (Goffman, 1963, 4).

Identification of a discrediting attribute, such as employment in a stigmatized field may prevent the identified person from gaining full acceptance by society (Goffman, 1963). Therefore, if striptease performers are denied full acceptance by society, then the assumption that striptease is a stigmatized occupation may be maintained. The deviant label, if successfully applied, has similar effects on the labeled individual

(Braithwaite, 1989). In other words, “stigma” can refer to the most extreme consequences of deviant labeling, involving rejection from conventional society.

In order to avoid this rejection, the striptease dancer must function simultaneously within “deviant” and “non-deviant” worlds while keeping each world separated from the other. In order to play these disparate roles, striptease dancers employ techniques of identity management, such as information control and dividing the social world, which are described more thoroughly in the literature review section of this thesis (Goffman, 1963).

While Goffman’s work provides a rich qualitative analysis of stigma and its consequences, Goffman supports his hypotheses with anecdotal data gathered from a wide array of social groups from criminals, to prostitutes, to mentally ill persons. Subsequent research, seeking to support these conclusions with empirical analysis, required a more sophisticated operational definition of stigma and more narrowly defined research populations. Later theoretical developments in the study of stigma have occurred predominately within the field of mental illness research. This analysis will attempt to apply concepts from Goffman as well as later researchers in the context of striptease and the stigma of a deviant occupation.

The Stigma Process

Link and Phelan (2001, 2006) in their attempt to provide a more complex, empirically useful, sociological conceptualization of stigma, define it as the co-occurrence of the following five components. First, people identify human differences and label these differences. Second, stereotypes are created which attach negative connotations to the labels. Next, a division is made between “them” and “us,” where

“they” are the individuals identified as different to whom the stereotypes are applied. Fourth, the labeled individual experiences prejudice, discrimination, and loss of status. These first four components make up the “stigma process” by which a group becomes stigmatized (Link & Phelan, 2001).

A fifth component is also included, but unlike the others is not a step in the stigma process, rather it emphasizes that stigmatization occurs within the context of unequal power relations-those with less power are labeled, while those with more power can escape stigmatization and its effects (Link & Phelan, 2001). For example, attorneys in this society may be stereotyped as greedy, heartless, and difficult to work with, but given their relative power in modern society, law is not considered a stigmatized profession and aside from the occasional “lawyer joke” its practitioners suffer little from these negative sentiments. In addition, this component of the stigma process may help to explain findings that male stripteasers tend to experience less stigmatization than their female colleagues (Thompson & Harred, 1993; Thompson, Harred, & Burks, 2003).

Corrigan and others (Corrigan, 2004; Rusch, Angermeyer, & Corrigan, 2005; Angermeyer & Matschinger, 2005) present a similar conceptualization of stigma from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. Their stigma process involves four steps as well. The first component involves cues that signal a particular condition, such as employment as a striptease performer (Corrigan, 2004). These cues correspond with the first and third components of Link and Phelan’s model (Rusch et al., 2005). Second, Corrigan and associates consider stereotypes, as do Link and Phelan (Corrigan, 2004; Rusch et al., 2005). Third, the researchers consider prejudiced attitudes which involve the

endorsement of these negative stereotypes and fourth, they examine discrimination as behavior resulting from prejudiced attitudes (Rusch et al., 2005). Prejudice and discrimination correspond with Link and Phelan's fourth component. While Corrigan (2004) and Rusch et al. (2005) do not explicitly include an equivalent to Link and Phelan's power component, this aspect of stigma is implied in the discrimination and labeling components. In the interest of clarity, Link and Phelan's (2001) conceptualization of this process will provide the theoretical framework for this thesis, however, parallel components of the model developed by Corrigan and others will also be incorporated where appropriate.

Striptease and the stigma process. The first component of the stigma process involves the identification and labeling of differences (Link & Phelan, 2001). In the case of striptease, the identification component involves the designation of "deviant" from "non-deviant" occupations. There are many perspectives on the nature of deviance. Many theories conceptualize deviance in terms of norm violations, however as demonstrated in the discussion of labeling theory, below, this approach to deviance is inadequate for the analysis of striptease as a deviant occupation, rather deviance is more adequately conceptualized as a subjective construct as described by labeling theories (Becker, 1963).

The second component of the stigma process involves the creation of negative stereotypes (Link & Phelan, 2001). Corrigan and Penn (1999, p.765) define stereotypes as "knowledge structures that are learned by most members of a social group." These knowledge structures or schema, they argue, are not necessarily negative, in and of themselves, rather they provide an efficient means to organize information about social

groups (Corrigan & Penn, 1999). However, when these schema are associated with negative attributes and lead to prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior, the stereotyped groups are stigmatized and many negative consequences may result (Corrigan & Penn, 1999).

A study by Skipper and McCaghy (1970, qtd in Thompson & Harred, 1992, p.298) identify several negative stereotypes of stripteasers. Researchers asked college students “what kind of women they thought took their clothes off for a living.” Among the responses given by students were “dumb,” “stupid,” “uneducated,” “lower class,” “oversexed,” “immoral,” and “prostitutes.”

The third component of the stigma process involves the identification and labeling of individuals as members of the deviant group to which the stereotypes are applied (Link & Phelan, 2001). Within the stigma process, the term “labeling,” as applied to striptease, would refer to the disclosure of the individual’s occupation. After the striptease performer is labeled, they are likely to be attributed with the negative characteristics described in the stereotypes above.

In the fourth step of the stigma process, the labeled individual experiences prejudice, discrimination, and loss of status (Link & Phelan, 2001). In the case of striptease, discrimination may include denial of jobs, housing, or medical care as a result of employment as a striptease performer (Barton, 2002).

Stigma and the Stress Process Model

The stress process model argues that stressors, defined as “any condition having the potential to arouse the adaptive machinery of the individual,” affect mental health and well-being (Pearlin, 1999, p.163). In this model, stressors can include life events

and chronic conditions. The effect of these stressors on mental health are mediated and moderated by three resources: coping, support, and mastery (Pearlin 1999).

As mentioned below, in the discussion of modified labeling theory, stigma can negatively affect social support networks (Link, Cullen, Struening, Shrout, & Dohrenwend, 1989). Additionally, research indicates that self-stigma has a negative effect on sense of mastery (Wright, Gronfein, & Owens, 2000). The stress process model anticipates that lowered levels of social support and mastery will increase the negative consequences of stressors (Pearlin, 1999).

Link and Phelan (2006) consider another way in which stigma affects the stress process, arguing that the negative experiences of stigma, such as discrimination and rejection, as well as the constant threat of stigmatization act as chronic stressors for those who are labeled or who are at a high risk of being labeled.

Literature Review

A large body of sociological research has examined striptease from a variety of perspectives. Among other things, research on striptease has focused on motivations of stripteesers and patrons, backgrounds of striptease dancers, social perceptions of striptease, and interactions between dancers and patrons. The research is almost exclusively qualitative. Methods used for data collection include participant observation, both from the perspective of patron and dancer, and interviewing both of patrons and dancers. Most of these analyses involve in-depth interviews of small samples. As a result, generalizing about striptease is problematic. Studies reflect different aspects of striptease under various conditions and from several angles and thus sometimes come to dissimilar conclusions.

Dramaturgical Perspective

Goffman's dramaturgical perspective (1959) is a frequently used framework for analyses within the literature on striptease. This perspective utilizes the metaphor of theatrical performance to interpret social interaction. Social actors utilize theatrical devices such as setting, costumes, props, and scripts to deliver performances designed to create an impression favorable to the goals of the performers.

The success of the performance is dependent on the ability of the performer to present an identity that will be accepted by the audience. If the identity portrayed by the actor is not accepted, then the performance fails and the actor's goals are compromised. From this perspective, in order to understand why striptease is defined as deviant while other similar behaviors and occupations are not, it is necessary to consider the goals of stripteasers, patrons, and striptease establishments.

Goals of Striptease

The primary goal of the striptease establishment and its employees, including dancers, is profit. This goal is achieved, for the club, primarily through the sale of drinks (Boles & Garbin, 1974; Enck & Preston, 1988). For the striptease dancer, the goal is realized through tips. Tips are earned from the sale of sexual turn-ons including stage dances, table dances, and counterfeit intimacy, which will be addressed later (Ronai & Ellis, 1989).

The employees of the club function as a performance team: stripteasers, bouncers, waitresses, disc jockeys, and managers work together to collect as much money from each customer as possible (Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997). The stripteaser's role in this team is to function as a salesperson, encouraging the customer to stay at the

club and continue buying drinks and private dances. In order to accomplish this function, the dancer must recognize the patrons' goals and deliver a performance that will fulfill, appear to fulfill, or promise to fulfill those goals (Enck & Preston, 1988).

Goals of patrons. The literature studying the goals of patrons reveals a wide variety of motivations. Erickson and Tewksbury's (1999) typology of strip club patrons characterizes patrons by their behaviors and patterns of interaction and, from this, attempts to determine their goals for attending the club. The findings suggest that the majority of men who attend striptease establishments seek voyeuristic or pornographic experiences, though some seek female companionship without the fear of rejection experienced at conventional bars. These findings are supported throughout the literature (Enck & Preston, 1988; Erickson & Tewksbury, 2000; Wood, 2000; Ronai & Ellis, 1989). The pursuit of sexual intercourse is another motivation demonstrated by the literature (Enck & Preston, 1988; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997). Feminist perspectives add the desire of men to dominate and exploit women through the exercise of male privilege and the objectification of women as other motivations (Wood, 2000; Barton, 2002).

These motivations can be summarized as such: patrons attend striptease clubs for the purpose of observing and participating in norm-violating behavior without experiencing sanctions (Erickson & Tewksbury, 2000; Pasko, 2002). Without the presence of the striptease establishment the fulfillment of these goals would be difficult or impossible within the norms of conventional society. It is the image of deviance that creates the appeal of the striptease club.

As a result, the striptease club, in order to attract customers and achieve its goals of profit, promotes the impression of itself as a “fantasy atmosphere” where deviant motivations can be realized (Enck & Preston, 1988; Thompson & Harred, 1992; Erickson & Tewksbury, 2000). Furthermore, the performance of this fantasy must be credible; the dancers must promote the image that the deviant role is genuine, otherwise the performance fails (Goffman, 1959). The importance of a sincere performance is emphasized throughout the literature (Enck & Preston, 1988; Wood, 2000).

Dramaturgical Elements of Striptease

Setting. The setting of the striptease club is structurally organized to appeal to the desires of the patrons by creating the impression of an alternate social world of sex and alcohol where their deviant fantasies are normative (Enck & Preston, 1988; Thompson & Harred, 1992; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997). In many clubs, the entrance to the club is separated from the outside by a small entryway physically dividing these two worlds. Once inside, dim lighting, neon signs, loud music, and, of course, nude or semi-nude dancers further the perception of a differential organized reality (Thompson & Harred 1992; Erickson & Tewksbury, 2000). Norms within the club function to encourage deviance, however this deviant action is strictly controlled to conform with the goals of the establishment. While fulfilling their deviant motives, patrons are expected to spend money, buying drinks and tipping dancers for their performances. Failure to comply with the norms of this deviant setting may result in harsh sanctions. Dancers and servers may ignore the offending patron, and in extreme cases, the violator may be expelled from the club (Erickson & Tewksbury, 2000).

Dancers must also conform to the deviant norms of the club, failure to convincingly perform the deviant role desired by the patron results in reduced tips and failure to effectively utilize counterfeit intimacy to encourage the patron to purchase drinks and dances can result in loss of income or, potentially, the loss of their job. Alternately, the more conventional norms a dancer is willing to defy, the greater tips she may receive (Barton, 2002). For example the more intimate physical contact the dancer engages in with a patron, the larger tip she is likely to receive, and even greater financial returns can potentially be achieved through sexual intercourse with patrons. While prostitution is prohibited both by law and by the official policies of the club, club management, in the interests of their profit motive, often neglects enforcement of this prohibition (Ronai & Ellis, 1989; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997). By both sanctioning conventional behavior and rewarding deviance, the striptease club creates and enforces a differentially organized system of norms intended to facilitate the goals of the establishment by encouraging deviance by patrons and employees.

Performance. The performance of the successful striptease dancer must be designed to appeal to patrons' deviant desires (Ronai & Ellis, 1989; Wood, 2000). Pasko (2002) describes this performance using Goffman's (1959) concept of the "confidence game." The confidence game involves the deceptive manipulation of identity for the purpose of exploiting or "conning" others (Goffman, 1959). Stripteasers select their "mark" and tailor their performance to appeal to his desires, as they are perceived and interpreted by the professional striptease performer (Boles & Garbin, 1974; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997).

The dancer employs a variety of dramaturgical techniques including costumes, music, makeup, scripts, and other props to portray a variety of images designed to satisfy the desires of their audience (Wood, 2000). For each patron, the stripteaser may play one of the many roles in her repertoire, such as the dominatrix, the wild party girl, the kinky slut, the sex-selling whore, or the innocent, helpless, virgin forced into striptease by external forces (Ronai & Ellis, 1989; Wood, 2000; Murphy, 2003).

Counterfeit intimacy is an important part of this “confidence game.” Counterfeit intimacy, in this context, refers to scripts used by the stripteaser to give patrons the impression that she is sexually available and is genuinely attracted to and interested in the patron (Ronai & Ellis, 1989; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997; Wood, 2000; Murphy, 2003). Enck and Preston (1988) outline a variety of ploys described as “the manner of counterfeit intimacy.” These ploys are utilized by striptasers to manipulate patrons’ desires for sexual experiences or female companionship in order to encourage tipping, sell private dances, and to develop repeat customers.

Labeling Theory

Labeling theory is another common theoretical perspective utilized in the striptease literature. This theory emphasizes the emergent, transitory, and contradictory character of social norms (Liska & Messner, 1999). Rather than accept any objective definition of deviance, labeling theory examines the process of defining deviance and the consequence of this process. According to Becker (1963), a founder of the labeling perspective, deviance does not exist apart from society, rather deviance is created by society through the application of deviant labels. Therefore, the same action may or

may not be deviant depending on whether or not it is successfully labeled as such and independent of any objective quality of the action (Becker, 1963).

Deviance as Norm Violation

In order to understand the labeling of striptease as deviance, it is useful to first examine the topic from the traditional norm-violation definition of deviance. From this perspective, striptease violates several longstanding societal norms. These “norms” should be viewed in the larger context of shared meanings defining abstract social concepts such as decency, art, love, marriage, or femininity. Violations of these norms challenge the shared perceptions of reality upon which they are constructed and can potentially evoke strong responses.

Normative standards of “decency.” Most obvious is the norm prohibiting public nudity, the violation of which is a defining attribute of striptease (Sweet & Tewksbury, 2000). However, all forms of public nudity are not equally labeled as deviant. Some research suggests that male striptease dancers are viewed far more positively than female stripteesers (Thompson & Harred, 1992). Thompson and Harred (1992) cite the famous Chippendale dancers as an example of male stripteesers not stigmatized or labeled as deviant. Furthermore, in the context of art, nudity is often not considered deviant at all.

On the other hand, some evidence suggests that male stripteesers experience stigmatization and labeling similar to female stripteesers (Ronai & Cross, 1998) and sometimes nudity presented as art, may be rejected as such and labeled as deviant pornography (Schweitzer, 2001).

Normative standards of "love." Another commonly accepted norm violated by the striptease dancer is the norm prohibiting the exchange of sexual acts for money, whether this be in the form of sexual intercourse, which occurs surreptitiously in many striptease establishments, or in the symbolic form of sexual fantasy, which is implicit in striptease. Overall (1992), in an analysis of sex work in general, and prostitution in particular, argues that in many ways prostitution is no different from other forms of paid labor and that the sale of sex, in varying forms, is widely practiced throughout society. Similarly, Ronai and Ellis (1989) in an analysis of interaction between strip club dancers and patrons find that strategies, such as counterfeit intimacy, used by dancers to sell sexual turn-ons are similar to those used to sell other goods and services within reputable service occupations. Yet, the housewife who exchanges sex for financial security is not labeled as deviant nor is the flirtatious salesperson who uses sexual appeal to sell products (Ronai & Ellis, 1989).

The purpose here is not to advocate prostitution or denigrate housewives, but to point out that the commodification of sex is an aspect of patriarchal society which affects all women in some respect, though all women are not labeled as deviant based on the violation of this social norm (Murphy, 2003). Furthermore, as mentioned previously, male stripteasers are generally not stigmatized to the extent of their female colleagues, despite the similar sexual connotations of their performances (Thompson & Harred, 1992).

Normative standards of "femininity." Thirdly, many argue that striptease dancers are labeled deviant because they violate patriarchal norms of appropriate feminine behavior and sexuality (Schweitzer, 2001; Mestemacher & Roberti, 2004). Some view

striptease dancers as empowered, confident, and independent (Murphy, 2003; Egan, 2003). By expressing and utilizing their sexuality, stripteasers are able to subvert repressive cultural norms that discourage women from enjoying sex, being sexually aggressive, or refusing a submissive role (Allen, 2001). Within the club, female stripteasers are able to behave aggressively and use their sexuality to exercise far greater power over their male customers than many women within conventional society (Barton, 2002; Wood, 2000). Conversely, others argue striptease reinforces patriarchal norms of male dominance by relegating women to the status of objects (Wood, 2000; Murphy, 2003). While the striptease performance may defy society's definitions of appropriate female behavior, it does so within the normative framework of male sexual fantasy (Wood, 2000).

Deviance as Labeling

The traditional norm-violation perspective of deviance thus fails to explain the deviant label applied to striptease. This represents a fundamental aspect of labeling theory: norm violations in and of themselves are not sufficient to explain the application of the deviant label. The violation must be understood in terms of the meanings it conveys. To be labeled as deviant, the actor must not only violate a norm, they must be perceived as someone who rejects those norms. While every person breeches norms occasionally, the deviant's violations are attributed to a failure to share the societal values upon which those norms are based.

Central to the explanation of the deviant label in striptease is the function that it serves for the club. Were the institution of striptease to gain widespread societal acceptance as nudity in the context of art, or as prostitution in the context of marriage,

or were societal norms of femininity or sexuality to change in a way as to normalize typical behavior within the striptease club, it would cease to serve its purpose. The deviant label is essential for the existence of the striptease industry.

Scheff's labeling theory. Scheff (1966) takes a negative view of labeling. This perspective argues that while most, if not all, people engage in "deviant" behaviors from time to time, few are officially labeled as "deviant" for these violations of norms (Scheff , 1966; Link, Cullen, Frank, & Wozniak, 1987). Once labeled, the individual is expected to be deviant and is treated as a deviant by society (Corrigan, Markowitz, Watson, Rowan, & Kubiak, 2003). The result is that the labeled individual eventually comes to internalize his or her expected role or else face punishment for attempting to act "normal" (Link et al., 1989). Applied to striptease, this perspective suggests that the primary cause for the negative outcomes typically associated with employment in the striptease field is the labeling process itself, rather than any inherent characteristic of the employees.

Modified labeling theory. To further address the complex relationship between labeling and stigma, Link and colleagues (1989) offer modified labeling theory as a revision of Scheff's labeling theory. This theory argues that even if labeling does not directly cause the negative outcomes typically associated with employment in the striptease industry, labeling has negative effects because it activates stereotypes held by both the public, but also by those who are labeled.

As a result, when one becomes a striptearer, they expect to be devalued, consistent with their previously held beliefs that women who strip are inferior or deficient. They may also expect to be rejected based on previously acquired knowledge that people who strip are viewed negatively by the public (Link et al., 1989).

In this way, the labeling can harm the labeled individual directly because their negative preconceptions of stripteasers become relevant to their conception of self. Additionally, the labeled individual might employ several strategies to avoid rejection such as secrecy or withdrawal that can limit the availability of social support networks, or they might attempt to educate the public about the inaccuracy of their conceptions of stripteasers, which involves disclosure of their label and can result in direct discrimination (Link et al., 1989).

Socioeconomic Background and Labeling

Labeling theory predicts that involvement in deviance is influenced by the social position of the labeled individual (Becker, 1963). Extensive legitimate social networks can strengthen bonds to society, which increase the deterrent effect of negative labels (Hirschi, 1969). Consistent with this prediction, research on the background of stripteasers finds that dancers tend to come from disadvantaged backgrounds and that economic need often provides the impetus for entering a career in striptease (Sweet & Tewksbury, 2000). Sweet and Tewksbury (2000) identify several characteristics common among the childhood experiences of stripteasers, including the absence of a father, early sexual experience, early independence, low self-esteem, parental neglect, as well as physical, mental, and/or sexual abuse.

Additionally, those individuals who are previously stigmatized by their background are not only more likely to enter a deviant occupation, their background also increases the likelihood they will be labeled and increases the negative effects of the label (Becker, 1963). This prediction is supported by Mestemacher and Roberti's (2004) comparison of career and goal-oriented stripteasers. They describe the goal-

oriented stripteaser as having a large network of supportive friends and family, as well as a wider variety of career opportunities, higher self-esteem, a middle class economic background, and a more pro-social attitude, whereas the career stripteaser is described as having no social support network, less diverse career options, low self-esteem, and a negative social outlook. The higher social capital of the goal-oriented stripper allows her greater resources to avoid deviant labeling and to avoid self-labeling. Unfortunately, few studies acknowledge the existence of strippers who avoid labeling and its negative effects as the goal-oriented stripper appears to do.

Consequences of Labeling

Therefore, for those in the striptease industry, the maintenance of deviant impressions is a necessary cost of conducting business. However, outside the deviant social world of the striptease club, the dancer faces the stigma ascribed to the deviant roles she plays. Labeling theory offers several insights into the consequences of deviant labeling.

Consequences of societal labeling. Simons (2004) suggests that deviant labels can undermine bonds to conventional society, which social bonding theory predicts would lead to further deviance (Hirschi, 1969). Indeed, the research demonstrates an increased likelihood among striptease dancers of other behaviors socially defined as deviant, including prostitution, drug abuse, and homosexuality, however the causal relationship between labeling and deviant behavior is unclear (Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997).

Furthermore, Braithwaite's (1989) concept of disintegrative shaming argues that deviant labeling and the resulting stigma may lead to rejection from society. Indeed,

some stripteasers report experiencing discrimination when trying to find “respectable” jobs, housing, or medical care, as a result of the stigma attributed to their occupation (Barton, 2002).

Consequences of self-labeling. Labeling theory also suggests that the application of the deviant label can lead to self-labeling, which can result in the labeled individual forming a negative self-concept, creating internal conflicts, lowering self esteem and increasing likelihood of secondary deviance (Liska & Messner, 1999). Similarly, Goffman (1963) notes that stigmatized individuals maintain learned views about their stigma, and judge themselves based upon the standards of the rest of society, leading to ambivalent feelings about their own identities. The research supports this hypothesis; interviews of stripteasers reveal negative self-concepts and identity conflicts leading to emotional strain (Wesely, 2003).

Avoiding Labeling by Dividing The Social World

Difficulty arises as the striptease dancer must conform to the norms of two contradictory social worlds. Avoiding the deviant label within the club would require a performance that compromises the industry’s profit motive, while accepting the deviant label would result in rejection from conventional society and negative perceptions of their own identity. In order to play these conflicting roles and avoid stigma, it becomes necessary to “divide the social world” (Goffman, 1959). Dividing the social world for the stripteaser involves segregating the deviant and non-deviant roles and serves two purposes: avoiding the application of the deviant label by conventional society, and avoiding self-labeling or the internalization of the deviant label.

Dividing the physical world. In the conventional world outside of the club, dancers must also perform, in this case they play a non-deviant role in order to comply with conventional norms and avoid stigmatization. Techniques of information control (Goffman, 1959) are utilized in order to maintain the division between the deviant and non-deviant roles. By concealing information about the stigmatizing attribute, in this case the deviant occupation, the dancer is able to pose, outside the club, as someone who does not possess the attribute, a technique of impression management known as “passing” (Goffman, 1963).

The research shows that dancers often conceal their deviant occupation from all but a small group of intimate friends or relatives (Thompson & Harred, 1992; Thompson, Harred, & Burks, 2003; Murphy, 2003). By enlisting the cooperation of those who would be most likely to discover the stigmatizing attribute, the discreditable individual is able to maintain the division of their social world, keeping the knowledge of the deviant social world confined to few individuals within the conventional world. The few individuals who are “in the know” can help to ensure the deviant role is not discovered (Goffman, 1963).

To those who are not aware of the stripteaser’s deviant role, dancers portray themselves as waitresses, entertainers, or as unemployed (Thompson & Harred, 1992; Thompson, Harred, & Burks, 2003; Barton, 2002; Murphy, 2003). Perhaps it is indicative of the stigma that dancers perceive is associated with their occupation that some prefer to label themselves as unemployed, another stigmatized title, than admit to striptease dancing.

Dividing the cognitive world. Internally, the dancer must divide the deviant role she is playing from her perception of her self as non-deviant. On stage, the stripteaser

carefully manages the impression she creates through her seemingly genuine performance, while at the same time maintaining social distance between her performed self and her own internal perception of self (Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997; Wood, 2000). This performance is best viewed as a “cynical performance,” one in which the performer does not believe in the role they are playing but feigns sincerity for the benefit of the audience or to perpetuate one’s own self-interests (Goffman, 1959). Through the cynical performance, the dancer is able to maintain the deviant role outwardly while maintaining a non-deviant role internally. Additionally, drugs can be used to assist in the division of the performer’s social world. Many stripteasers report using alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, or ecstasy while working in order to cognitively dissociate themselves from their deviant role (Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997).

Ronai and Cross (1998) describe another method of identity management used to divide the stripteaser’s deviant and non-deviant roles, termed “narrative resistance.” Through narrative resistance, dancers utilize relative definitions of deviance to maintain a non-deviant definition of their own identity. Ronai and Cross (1998) outline deviant exemplars, particularly “sleaze” and “immersion,” used by stripteasers to define their identity in relation to other dancers who they consider deviant. For example, using the sleaze exemplar, topless dancers may define themselves as less sleazy than nude dancers because they do not fully undress. On the other hand, nude dancers may define themselves as less sleazy than topless dancers, because nude dancers tend to have less physical contact with patrons.

The immersion exemplar refers to the degree to which a dancer has internalized their deviant role. Dancers who are seen as receiving too much enjoyment from their

work are generally looked down upon by other dancers (Ronai & Ellis, 1989). Although stripteasers frequently define themselves as non-deviant, it is important to note they still define themselves, their coworkers, and their occupation in terms of deviance as defined by conventional society (Ronai & Cross, 1998).

Finally, Thompson and Harred (1992) find that dancers attempt to distance themselves from the deviant role by utilizing techniques of neutralization similar to those described by Sykes and Matza (qtd. in Thompson & Harred, 1992) in order to maintain a non-deviant self-concept. Stripteasers may define their work as “harmless” (denying injury,) by describing those that pass moral judgment on them as hypocrites (condemning the condemners,) and by claiming that they only dance in order to provide for their families (appealing to higher loyalties.)

Consequences of a divided social world. The maintenance of two separate versions of the self inevitably leads to difficulties for the stripteaser and this separation cannot be maintained indefinitely. Wesley (2003) focuses on identity conflicts faced by striptease dancers. Many of the dancers interviewed reported that, eventually, the deviant role they played invaded their conception of their self, indicating the internalization of the deviant role. As a result, many of the dancers interviewed had negative perceptions of their selves and exhibited great emotional suffering, particularly among those who had been in the occupation for several years (Wesley, 2003; Thompson, Harred, and Burks, 2003). Unfortunately, for stripteasers, like many women in sex-work, opportunities for career change can be limited due to their disadvantaged socioeconomic background, which may have initially led to striptease, as well as by the stigma applied to them as stripteasers.

Summary

The existing literature on striptease offers several excellent qualitative analyses of the industry and particularly of the complex interpersonal exchanges which occur within a dramaturgical framework. Additionally this framework provides an excellent means for describing the consequences of stigma as experienced by individual performers and the strategies used by them to avoid stigma. However, this topic has rarely been examined through quantitative methods. Alternately, the literature on the stigma process, also discussed above, offers an empirically tested model of stigma that has been used for quantitative analyses. This approach is valuable because it enables stigma to be measured objectively and therefore can be compared across groups. However this model has not been previously applied to the stigma experienced by striptease performers. The present study will attempt to utilize this model to measure the stigma experienced by stripteasers relative to a control group and to explore the correlates of stigma as identified by the literature.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of labeling on social rejection of stripteasers in an attempt to test the labeling component of Link and Phelan's (2001) stigma process model. This model predicts that labeling an individual as a member of a stigmatized group, in this case as a striptease performer, will result in social rejection. Specifically, it is predicted that labeling will activate negative stereotypes, which will then result in rejection of the labeled individual.

Study Design

This study uses a vignette design adapted from a similar experiment by Link and colleagues (1987) used to test the relationship between labeling and social rejection among former mental patients. The advantage of this approach is that it creates a controlled environment in which to test the consequences of applying the "stripteaser" label by comparing a hypothetical character identified as a stripteaser to another hypothetical character who is the same in every respect with the exception of occupation.

Survey

Two survey instruments were developed for this study. In designing the vignette, I attempted to include enough information about the hypothetical individual to allow respondents to formulate opinions based on more than just the label alone. This addresses a potential problem with using vignette studies to examine the effects of labeling which is mentioned by Link and colleagues (1987). Additionally, I attempted to

include ambiguous descriptive information that could be interpreted either positively or negatively by respondents. It was predicted that prejudicial beliefs about the occupation assigned to the hypothetical character would influence the respondents' interpretations of this ambiguous information.

The experimental survey instrument included the following vignette describing a hypothetical striptease dancer:

Here is a description of a 23 year-old woman, let's call her Maria. Maria is looking to make some changes in her life. After graduating high school, Maria started attending a local community college, but had to drop out after the first year. Since then she has been working full-time as a dancer at a topless club. Her job pays well, but she would like to find a new job that provides more responsibility and a more stable paycheck and eventually return to college.

In addition to finding a new job, Maria would like to find new roommates. In the past she has gotten along well with her roommates, but occasionally they had some minor arguments because Maria sometimes stays out late after work and wakes her roommates up when she comes in. This happens about two or three times a month when Maria and her friends from work go out drinking at a local bar. Although she occasionally drinks too much, it has never led to any serious problems.

Finally, Maria would also like to find a new boyfriend; she has had three boyfriends in the past year, but none of these relationships were serious. She is currently single and wants to meet interesting men her age, but she is not interested in a long-term relationship at this time in her life.

In the control version of the survey the vignette was modified by replacing the phrase “dancer at a topless club” with “maid for a local housekeeping service.” After reading the vignette, respondents in both groups were asked to answer a series of social distance questions about the person described. The social distance questions are adapted from a study by Link et al. (1987) and are ask about the respondents’ willingness to accept the hypothetical character described in the vignette in a number of social relationships such as neighbor, roommate, or coworker.

The second portion of the survey consisted of eight terms, listed in a semantic differential format. For example, some of the word pairs included were high self-esteem/low self-esteem, intelligent/unintelligent, prudish/promiscuous, responsible/irresponsible, and high social class/low social class. Respondents in the experimental and control groups were asked to choose the term they felt best describes striptease performers or housekeepers, respectively, and to what extent the term describes that occupation, in general. The terms used were derived from findings of a study by Skipper and McCaghy (1970, qtd. in Thompson & Harred, 1992) that examined stereotypes of stripteasers. A semantic differential format was chosen in order present common stereotypical ideas of striptease performers without introducing a negative bias.

Next, in the experimental group only, a series of questions were asked measuring respondents’ familiarity with the striptease industry. This was done in order to control for potential biases that may result from high levels of contact with the industry. Respondents are asked questions such as “Have you ever been to a strip club?” “Do you know anyone who works or has worked at a strip club?” and “Have you

ever worked at a strip club?" Allport's contact hypothesis (qtd. in Couture & Penn, 2003) suggests that intimate contact with stigmatized groups can reduce rejecting attitudes. Finally, respondents in both groups were asked to report their gender. The full text of the control and experimental versions of the survey are included in appendices A and B, respectively.

Population and Sample

The study used a convenience sample taken from students enrolled in an upper-level sociology class during a summer session at a four-year university in Texas. Of the 120 students enrolled in the course, 102 were present on the day the survey was administered and 89 students (74.2% of the total number of students enrolled) participated in the survey. The survey was conducted at the beginning of the term on the second class day in an attempt to limit any potentially biasing effects of the course material, however it is likely that the students had taken other courses in sociology during previous terms. Of the 89 respondents, 60 (67.4%) were randomly assigned to the experimental group. The survey was administered during class time. Participation was voluntary and data was collected anonymously. Respondents were notified of their rights and implied consent was obtained in accordance with the policies of the University's Institutional Review Board through a brief statement at the beginning of the survey instrument. This consent statement was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board prior to the commencement of the study and is reproduced in Appendices A and B. The sample includes 35 males and 51 females; three respondents did not indicate their gender.

Variables

1. Social Rejection: a dependent variable measured as the sum of responses on six items intended to measure desire for social distance, with possible responses ranging from “definitely willing” to “definitely unwilling.” Definitely willing is coded as 1 and Definitely unwilling as 5. Values reported range from 6 to 30, with 30 indicating the highest possible level of rejection. A Cronbach’s alpha value of .84 suggests moderately high reliability. Descriptive statistics for the items in this scale are presented in Table 1.

2. Labeling: an independent, dichotomous, variable determined by assignment to the experimental group (the group receiving the stripteaser vignette) or the control group. Respondents assigned to the experimental group were assigned a value of 1. Members of the control group were assigned a value of 0.

3. Negative Perceptions: an independent variable measured as the sum of responses to six items from an eight-adjective semantic differential intended to measure endorsement of negative stereotypes. Responses on each item range from “very” to “average” to “very” on a bipolar scale with the most negative response coded with a value of 7 and the most positive responses coded as 1. Neutral responses are coded as 4 and the scores for all included items are summed. The variables measuring perceived insecurity and unattractiveness were excluded from the scale because attractiveness and confidence are attributes that are could be considered prerequisites for obtaining employment as a nude performer and understandably, these variables did not demonstrate a higher average score for stripteasers than for housekeepers. The resulting scale ranges 12 to 39 with a mean value of 25.86 ($SD=6.33$). A Cronbach’s

alpha value of .80 suggests moderate reliability. Descriptive statistics for the items included in this scale are presented in Table 2.

4. Familiarity: a control variable measured as the sum of affirmative responses to five questions related to familiarity with the striptease industry. Affirmative responses to each item are coded as 1 and negative responses as 0. In the final analysis the question asking whether or not respondent has ever worked as a stripteaser is omitted because there were no affirmative responses to this question among the respondents. Values reported range from 0 to 4 with a mean value of 1.75 ($SD=1.22$) and a mode of one. A Cronbach's alpha value of .64 suggests low reliability. Respondents were asked if they had ever been to a striptease club and if they have ever worked as a striptease performer. They were also asked if anyone they know, any of their close friends, or anyone in their family currently work or have worked at a striptease establishment.

5. Gender: a dichotomous control variable. Responses are dummy coded with female coded as 0 and male as 1.

Hypotheses

1. Overall, the experimental group will report greater desire for social distance than the control group.

2. Overall, the experimental group will report higher levels of endorsement for negative stereotypes than the control group

3. Desire for social distance will be related to endorsement of negative stereotypes among the experimental group.

4. Familiarity with the striptease industry will be associated with less negative views and less desire for social distance among respondents in the experimental group.

Statistical Methods

Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 12. Tests for significance were conducted at the .05 level. One-tailed tests were used because the research hypotheses predicted directional associations. Cases with missing data were excluded from analyses where these variables were utilized. To test the first and second hypotheses, independent samples *t*-tests were used to compare the responses to the social rejection scale and negative perceptions scale as well as the individual items that comprise these scales. The third hypothesis was tested by calculating the correlation coefficient for the negative opinions and social rejection scales and by estimating a linear regression model including the two variables. The familiarity scale was added to this regression model to test the fourth hypothesis.

CHAPTER 3

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Responses to the social rejection variables can potentially range from 1, indicating “definitely willing” to 5, indicating “definitely unwilling” with a value of 3 indicating “neutral.” Table one, below, summarizes the findings. Overall, respondents showed the least willingness to accept the hypothetical character as a caretaker for their children ($M=3.97$) and the highest acceptance for the character as a potential neighbor ($M=2.36$). With the exception of this item, respondents, on average, gave rejecting responses to all of these questions.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Social Rejection Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Mode	N	Skewness
Roommate	3.55	1.066	4	89	-.279
Coworker	3.34	0.999	4	89	-.236
Recommend for a job	3.31	1.029	3	89	-.349
Neighbor	2.36	0.937	2	88	.407
Caretaker	3.97	1.038	5	89	-.803
Date Friend	3.30	1.162	3	89	-.042

Responses to the variables measuring endorsement of negative stereotypes potentially range from 1 to 7, with a value of 7 indicating strong endorsement of the negative attribute and a value of 4 indicating a neutral response. Table two, below,

presents the descriptive statistics for the variables measuring endorsement of negative stereotypes. The highest average response was give for “low social class ($M=5.17$) and the lowest for unattractiveness ($M=3.56$).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Stereotype Endorsement Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Mode	N	Skewness
Insecure	3.77	1.818	2	88	.206
Low Self-esteem	4.61	1.745	6	88	-.261
Unintelligent	3.80	1.209	4	87	-.220
Promiscuous	4.91	1.475	4	88	-.126
Unattractive	3.56	1.477	4	88	.215
Irresponsible	3.77	1.638	4	88	.166
Untrustworthy	3.66	1.429	4	87	-.003
Low Social Class	5.17	1.366	6	88	-.482

Bivariate Analyses

After separating the data from the control group and the experimental group, more meaningful comparisons can be made. Among the rejection variables, the highest average response for both groups is on the variable measuring willingness to accept the hypothetical character as a caretaker for their children. However, this mean is higher for the stripteaser vignette ($M=4.22$) than the housekeeper vignette ($M=3.45$). Alternately, the most accepting responses for both groups was for the variable measuring willingness to accept the hypothetical character as a neighbor. For the stripteaser vignette, the mean value was 2.39 and for the housekeeper vignette, the mean was 2.31.

Respondents, on average, rated the stripteaser vignette with more rejecting responses than the housekeeper vignette on every variable except the variable measuring willingness to accept the hypothetical character as a coworker. However, results from t-tests indicate that the difference in means is only significant for the variable measuring willingness to accept as a caretaker ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

Table 3

Comparisons of Central Tendencies for Social Rejection Variables between Striptease Performers and Housekeepers

Variable	Label	Mean	SD	Mode
Roommate	Stripteaser	3.67	0.951	4
	Housekeeper	3.31	1.257	2
Coworker	Stripteaser	3.33	0.968	4
	Housekeeper	3.34	1.078	3
Recommend for a Job	Stripteaser	3.37	1.008	3
	Housekeeper	3.21	1.082	3
Neighbor	Stripteaser	2.39	0.965	3
	Housekeeper	2.31	0.891	2
Caretaker*	Stripteaser	4.22	0.958	5
	Housekeeper	3.45	1.021	4
Date Friend	Stripteaser	3.42	1.139	3
	Housekeeper	3.07	1.193	2
Social Rejection Scale*	Stripteaser	20.42	4.13	-
	Housekeeper	18.69	5.41	-

* $p < .05$, one-tailed

Analysis of the Social Rejection scale created from these variables produces similar results. The mean value of this scale for the entire sample is 19.85 ($SD=4.63$). For the experimental group the mean value of 20.42 ($SD=4.13$) is significantly higher

than the mean for the control group ($M=18.69$, $SD=5.41$) at the .05 level ($p=.0495$, one-tailed).

Among the stereotype variables (Table 4), the highest averages among the experimental group are for the variables measuring perceptions of stripteasers as promiscuous ($M=5.37$) and as members of a low social class ($M=5.24$). The lowest average is for the variable measuring perceptions of unattractiveness ($M=3.22$). Among the control group, the highest average is for the variable measuring perceptions of housekeepers as members of a low social class ($M=5.03$) and lowest averages are for the variables measuring perceptions of housekeepers as irresponsible ($M=2.59$) and untrustworthy ($M=2.62$).

For the stereotype variables, the stripteaser vignette evoked stronger negative responses on every variable except those measuring perceptions of stripteasers or housekeepers as insecure or unattractive. The difference in means is significant for the variables measuring perceptions of low self-esteem and perceptions of being promiscuous, irresponsible, and untrustworthy ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

Analysis of the Negative Perception scale derived from six of these stereotype variables produces similar results. The mean for the experimental group ($M=27.84$, $SD=6.14$) is higher than for the control group ($M=21.90$, $SD=4.70$) and this difference is statistically significant ($p < .05$, one-tailed).

Table 4

Comparisons of Central Tendencies for Stereotype Variables between Striptease Performers and Housekeepers

Variable	Label	Mean	SD	Mode
Insecure	Stripteaser	3.71	1.948	2
	Housekeeper	3.90	1.543	2
Low Self-esteem*	Stripteaser	4.85	1.864	6,7
	Housekeeper	4.14	1.382	4
Unintelligent	Stripteaser	3.93	1.122	4
	Housekeeper	3.55	1.352	4
Promiscuous*	Stripteaser	5.37	1.530	7
	Housekeeper	3.97	0.731	4
Unattractive	Stripteaser	3.22	1.521	2
	Housekeeper	4.24	1.123	4
Irresponsible*	Stripteaser	4.36	1.517	4
	Housekeeper	2.59	1.181	2
Untrustworthy*	Stripteaser	4.17	1.286	4
	Housekeeper	2.62	1.115	2
Low Social Class	Stripteaser	5.24	1.343	6
	Housekeeper	5.03	1.426	6
Negative Perception Scale*	Stripteaser	27.84	6.14	-
	Housekeeper	21.90	4.70	-

* $p < .05$, one-tailed

The social rejection and negative perception scales are moderately correlated in the sample as indicated by a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.350 ($p < .05$, one-tailed). When the control group is excluded, the Pearson correlation coefficient for the rejection and negative perception variables increases to 0.412 ($p < .05$, one-tailed) When the experimental group is excluded this value is reduced to 0.136 and is no longer statically significant ($p = .241$, one-tailed). This suggests that the relationship between negative perceptions of career and social rejection is stronger for stripteasers than housekeepers.

Multivariate Analyses

A linear regression model is used to examine the influence of negative perceptions on social rejection within the experimental group in an attempt to illuminate the causes of rejecting responses. When the model is estimated for the experimental group, there appears to be a modest, statistically significant, relationship between high scores on the negative perceptions scale and high scores on the social rejection scale. However the explanatory power of this model is weak.

Table 5

Regression of Social Rejection Scale on Negative Perceptions Scale, Familiarity and Gender within the Experimental Group

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Negative Perceptions	0.412*	0.401*	0.401*
Familiarity	-	-0.095	-0.076
Gender	-	-	-0.111
R^2	0.169	0.178	0.190

* Significant at $p < .01$, one-tailed

Next, the familiarity scale is added to the model. While the coefficient is small, the relationship is in the expected direction, suggesting that within the sample, increases in familiarity with the striptease industry are associated with decreased rejection when negative perceptions are controlled. However, this effect is small and not statistically significant ($p = .224$, one-tailed). Similarly, the correlation between the familiarity scale and the social rejection scale is also in the expected direction but is not statistically significant ($p = .148$, one-tailed).

The gender variable, when added to the model appears to have a minor effect, suggesting that, on average, males in the sample tended to give slightly less rejecting responses than females when controlled for familiarity and negative perceptions. However, this finding is not statistically significant ($p=0.191$, one-tailed). Neither of the control variables appears to produce a substantial improvement in the overall fit of the model.

Table 6

Regression of Social Rejection Scale on Stereotype Endorsement Variables within the Experimental Group

Predictors	Stand. Beta	Sig., (one tailed)
Constant	-	.000
Low Self-esteem	0.063	.329
Unintelligent*	0.241	.039
Promiscuous	-0.084	.144
Irresponsible	0.318	.067
Untrustworthy	0.245	.095
Low Social Class*	-0.282	.026

* $p < .05$, one-tailed

When, for the experimental group, the social rejection scale is regressed on each of the six items included in the negative perceptions scale individually, the R squared value improves dramatically ($R^2 = .336$). However, this result is questionable due to the small size of the sub-sample examined ($n = 60$) relative to the number of independent variables considered in the model. In this case it would be appropriate to consider the

adjusted R^2 value of .257 as a more reliable estimate of model fit. Nevertheless, this suggests a moderately good fit and an F test produces a value that is significant at the .01 level ($F= 4.224, p= .002$). However, only two of the beta values for the six predictor variables achieves statistical significance at the .05 level. Failure to achieve significant beta values for these variables is likely a result of significant intercorrelation between the variables as shown in Table 7, below.

Table 7

Correlations of Rejection Scale and Stereotype Variables

	Rejection Scale	Insecure	Low Self-esteem	Unintelligent	Promiscuous	Unattractive	Irresponsible	Untrustworthy	Low Social Class
Rejection Scale	-								
Insecure	.249*	-							
Low Self-Esteem	.185	.667*	-						
Unintelligent	.387*	.296*	.161	-					
Promiscuous	.263*	.407*	.347*	.360*	-				
Unattractive	.097	.365*	.292*	.256*	.335*	-			
Irresponsible	.475*	.344*	.416*	.447*	.573*	.227*	-		
Untrustworthy	.473*	.318*	.427*	.422*	.375*	.157	.754*	-	
Low Social Class	.046	.218*	.414*	.265*	.191	.101	.432*	.341*	-

* $p < .05$, one-tailed

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The results of the present study appear to provide limited support for the research hypotheses indicated above. The first hypothesis predicted that overall, the experimental group would report greater desire for social distance than the control group, which would demonstrate the stigma of employment as a striptease performer. The differences in means between the groups only achieved statistical significance on one variable, willingness to accept the hypothetical character as a caretaker for their children. However, within the sample, it should be noted that the stripteaser vignette received higher mean rejecting responses than the control group on five of the six variables. Furthermore, when these variables were combined to form the scale measuring social rejection, the experimental group demonstrated a higher mean than the control group and this difference was statistically significant at the .05 level.

Similarly, the data from the stereotype questions suggest that attitudes toward stripteasers in general tend to be more negative than attitudes toward housekeepers. The second hypothesis is supported by findings showing significant differences in means for four of the eight stereotype variables: low self-esteem, promiscuous, irresponsible, and untrustworthy, and for the negative perception scale, which was derived from six of the eight stereotype variables. Additionally, the stripteaser vignette evoked stronger negative responses on every stereotype variable except those measuring perceptions of stripteasers or housekeepers as insecure or unattractive. In

retrospect, the lower responses on these variables are not surprising as confidence and attractiveness are attributes needed for nude performance.

The third hypothesis predicted that desire for social distance would be related to endorsement of negative stereotypes among the experimental group, in accordance with the stigma process model and labeling theory. This hypothesis is supported by the moderate correlation between the negative opinion and social rejection scales and is further supported by linear regression models of the two variables. This finding is compatible with the stigma process model, which predicts that rejection and discrimination experienced by stigmatized groups is frequently a result of negative stereotypes applied to those groups (Link & Phelan, 2001). The findings also lend support to labeling theory which makes a similar prediction.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that familiarity with the striptease industry would be associated with less negative views and less desire for social distance among respondents in the experimental group. Linear regression modeling demonstrated that within the sample, this relationship occurred in the predicted direction. However, the influence of familiarity was weak and did not achieve statistical significance. It is important to note that only a small number of respondents reported any experience with the striptease industry beyond that of having attended a striptease establishment.

Shortcomings of Research Design

The failure to achieve statistical significance for many of the relationships examined is likely due to several flaws in the study design. First, the sample is small and non-random. The small size of the sample decreases the likelihood of achieving statistically significant results for any association tested. Additionally, use of a non-

random convenience sample is likely to skew the data for numerous reasons. Although educational status was not measured, it can be expected that the average education level of the sample would be higher than the general population as all respondents were currently enrolled in an upper-level course at a university. For the same reason, the average age of the sample is likely to be younger than the general population.

Furthermore, it can be expected that participation in Sociology courses could potentially bias the responses collected. Therefore, as is the case with all non-random samples, generalizability of findings is problematic.

Second, the decision to use housekeeper as the occupation for the control group is also problematic. Mean rejection values and mean negative stereotype endorsement values suggest that housekeepers also represent a stigmatized occupational group. As a result, it is not possible to fully isolate the effects of stigma on stripteasers using this study design. Additionally, because minority ethnic groups stereotypically occupy housekeeping jobs, the apparent stigmatized status of housekeepers is potentially influenced by the unintentional introduction of bias due to racial stigma. However, I believe that identifying the hypothetical character in the survey vignettes with a stereotypically Hispanic name may partially control for the influence of perceived race of the hypothetical character.

Thirdly, the questions used to measure familiarity were inadequate indicators of contact as defined by Allport (qtd. in Couture & Penn, 2003). Future research should include a more sophisticated contact measure that attempts to account for the nature of relationships with the stigmatized group as well as the degree of contact. Additionally,

the low number of affirmative responses to this component of the survey instrument demonstrates the need for a more sensitive scale to measure contact.

Conclusion

While the present study failed to produce compelling evidence of the occupational stigma faced by stripteasers and its consequences in terms of social rejection, it provides a foundation for future research on the topic. It is clear from this analysis that even within the narrow scope of the convenience sample employed, stripteasers in society are likely to be stigmatized by many respondents. It is reasonable to predict that the general population may endorse views that are more negative and may be less tolerant of stripteasers than university students with training in sociology.

Conversely, it is also possible that this study's failure to provide conclusive evidence of stigma may indicate that striptease performers today may no longer experience the same levels of stigmatization demonstrated in previous research. Societal conceptions of deviance are continuously evolving alongside changing social norms. If society has become more accepting of striptease, then the stigmatization of striptease performers would be expected to decrease and the negative consequences of stigma would be reduced.

Striptease and stigma are two complex multi-dimensional topics. As such, it is important to acknowledge the narrow focus of the present research in terms of some of the major issues it does not address. While the findings of this analysis suggest that stigma acts as a unique hardship upon striptease performers, stigma is certainly not the only hardship that striptease performers face. The study does not fully examine factors such as previous traumatic experiences and disadvantaged backgrounds which may

exacerbate the negative effects of stigma and which are also likely to function as independent sources of hardship. The previous literature demonstrates the importance of such factors and their relationship to negative outcomes for striptease performers (Sweet & Tewksbury, 2000).

Additionally, this analysis does not examine how striptease performers may cope with stigma and avoid its negative effects. The existing literature suggests that social capital, such as the availability of support networks and level of education can mediate the negative outcomes typically associated with employment as a striptease performer (Mestemacher & Roberti, 2004). Techniques of stigma management, which are discussed at length in the literature have also been demonstrated to have an important mediating role in the relationship between stigma and negative outcomes (Forsyth & Deshotels, 1997; Ronai and Cross, 1998; Goffman, 1963; Thompson & Harred, 1992; Thompson, Harred, & Burks, 2003).

Finally, this analysis does not fully examine the complex relationship between negative stereotype endorsement and social rejection. Research by Corrigan et al. (2003) conducted in the field of mental illness, suggests that attribution of blame or responsibility can influence this relationship. In short, their findings suggest that if a stereotypical attribute is deemed to be beyond the control of the individual, it may evoke pity rather than rejection. This strain of research reveals a promising direction for future elaboration upon the stigma process model employed by the present study.

This thesis sought to address two shortcomings in the field of striptease research. The first of these is a lack of quantitative data. The second is a need for a more empirically useful understanding of the concept of stigma. The present study is

one of few that employ a survey design to examine this topic. The vignette approach provides a useful method for measuring the relative stigma associated with different occupations in a controlled experimental format and could be employed in a larger study comparing multiple occupations. Additionally this study provides support for the labeling component of the stigma process model and suggests that the model can be successfully applied to the stigma faced by striptease performers and could be a useful model for understanding how stigma works in this context as well as for examining other forms of occupational stigma.

As demonstrated in the existing research on stigma conducted within the field of mental illness, empirical data is necessary to further our understanding of stigma and its consequences. It is hoped that with a better theoretical and practical understanding of the concept of stigma, programs may be designed which are effective in reducing its negative consequences including rejection and discrimination.

APPENDIX A

TEXT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT(CONTROL VERSION)

My name is Omar Ebeid and I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of North Texas. I am conducting research on lifestyles and social rejection. The data collected is to be used for my thesis and potentially for other academic publications.

You are being asked to participate in a brief survey about your opinions. The questions should take 10-15 minutes and all answers will be completely anonymous. Please do not write your name on the survey.

If you have questions about the study you may contact the principal investigator or faculty advisor listed below:

Principal Investigator: Omar Ebeid, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Sociology.
email: [Redacted]
Phone: [Redacted]

Faculty advisor: Dr. Kevin Yoder, UNT Department of Sociology.
Phone: [Redacted].

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you have the right to stop the survey at any time and to refuse to answer any of the questions.

From this study, we hope to gain a better understanding of social rejection and understand how different lifestyles are perceived by others. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, please email me with your contact information.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at [Redacted] with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

You may remove this cover sheet and keep it for your records.

I greatly appreciate your assistance with this project.

Please read the following vignette and answer the questions about it listed below.

Here is a description of a 23 year-old woman, let's call her Maria. Maria is looking to make some changes in her life. After graduating high school, Maria started attending a local community college, but had to drop out after the first year. Since then she has been working full-time as a maid for a local housekeeping service. Her job pays well, but she would like to find a new job that provides more responsibility and a more stable paycheck and eventually return to college.

In addition to finding a new job, Maria would like to find new roommates. In the past she has gotten along well with her roommates, but occasionally they had some minor arguments because Maria sometimes stays out late after work and wakes her roommates up when she comes in. This happens about two or three times a month when Maria and her friends from work go out drinking at a local bar. Although she occasionally drinks too much, it has never led to any serious problems.

Finally, Maria would also like to find a new boyfriend; she has had three boyfriends in the past year, but none of these relationships were serious. She is currently single and wants to meet interesting men her age, but she is not interested in a long-term relationship at this time in her life.

Please answer the following questions about the person who has just been described, try to answer as honestly as possible.

	Definitely Willing	Probably Willing	Neutral	Probably Unwilling	Definitely Unwilling
How would you feel about sharing a house or apartment with someone like Maria?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about being a co-worker on an important class project with someone like Maria?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about recommending someone like Maria for a job working for a friend of yours?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about having someone like Maria as a neighbor?	1	2	3	4	5
How about as the caretaker of your children for a few hours? (If you don't have children, imagine how you would feel if you did)	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about introducing someone like Maria as a potential romantic partner, to a close friend of yours?	1	2	3	4	5

The next set of questions focus on opinions about women who work as maids or housekeepers, in general. Examine each pair of words and determine which word best describes people in this field and to what extent the word applies.

Women who work as maids or housekeepers tend to be:

	Very	Somewhat	A Little	Average	A Little	Somewhat	Very	
Confident	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Insecure
High self-esteem	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Low self-esteem
Intelligent	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Unintelligent
Prudish	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Promiscuous
Attractive	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Unattractive
Responsible	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Irresponsible
Trustworthy	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Untrustworthy
High social class	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Low social class

Finally, I would like to compare if responses differ between men and women, please indicate your gender below:

Male Female

APPENDIX B

TEXT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT (EXPERIMENTAL VERSION)

My name is Omar Ebeid and I am a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the University of North Texas. I am conducting research on lifestyles and social rejection. The data collected is to be used for my thesis and potentially for other academic publications.

You are being asked to participate in a brief survey about your opinions. The questions should take 10-15 minutes and all answers will be completely anonymous. Please do not write your name on the survey.

If you have questions about the study you may contact the principal investigator or faculty advisor listed below:

Principal Investigator: Omar Ebeid, a graduate student in the University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Sociology.

email: [Redacted]

Phone: [Redacted]

Faculty advisor: Dr. Kevin Yoder, UNT Department of Sociology.

Phone: [Redacted].

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you have the right to stop the survey at any time and to refuse to answer any of the questions.

From this study, we hope to gain a better understanding of social rejection and understand how different lifestyles are perceived by others. If you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, please email me with your contact information.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at [Redacted] with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

You may remove this cover sheet and keep it for your records.

I greatly appreciate your assistance with this project.

Please read the following vignette and answer the questions about it listed below.

Here is a description of a 23 year-old woman, let's call her Maria. Maria is looking to make some changes in her life. After graduating high school, Maria started attending a local community college, but had to drop out after the first year. Since then she has been working full-time as a dancer at a topless club. Her job pays well, but she would like to find a new job that provides more responsibility and a more stable paycheck and eventually return to college.

In addition to finding a new job, Maria would like to find new roommates. In the past she has gotten along well with her roommates, but occasionally they had some minor arguments because Maria sometimes stays out late after work and wakes her roommates up when she comes in. This happens about two or three times a month when Maria and her friends from work go out drinking at a local bar. Although she occasionally drinks too much, it has never led to any serious problems.

Finally, Maria would also like to find a new boyfriend; she has had three boyfriends in the past year, but none of these relationships were serious. She is currently single and wants to meet interesting men her age, but she is not interested in a long-term relationship at this time in her life.

Please answer the following questions about the person who has just been described, try to answer as honestly as possible.

	Definitely Willing	Probably Willing	Neutral	Probably Unwilling	Definitely Unwilling
How would you feel about sharing a house or apartment with someone like Maria?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about being a co-worker on an important class project with someone like Maria?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about recommending someone like Maria for a job working for a friend of yours?	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about having someone like Maria as a neighbor?	1	2	3	4	5
How about as the caretaker of your children for a few hours? (If you don't have children, imagine how you would feel if you did)	1	2	3	4	5
How would you feel about introducing someone like Maria as a potential romantic partner, to a close friend of yours?	1	2	3	4	5

The next set of questions focus on opinions about women who work in strip clubs as dancers, in general. Examine each pair of words and determine which word best describes people in this field and to what extent the word applies.

Women who work as dancers in nude or semi-nude (strip) clubs tend to be:

	Very	Somewhat	A Little	Average	A Little	Somewhat	Very	
Confident	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Insecure
High self-esteem	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Low self-esteem
Intelligent	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Unintelligent
Prudish	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Promiscuous
Attractive	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Unattractive
Responsible	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Irresponsible
Trustworthy	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Untrustworthy
High social class	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	Low social class

The following questions ask about your personal experiences with women in strip clubs. Please circle the appropriate response.

Have you ever been to a strip club? Yes No

Do you know anyone who works or has worked at a strip club? Yes No

Do you have any close friends who work or have worked at a strip club? Yes No

Have any of your family members ever worked at a strip club? Yes No

Have you ever worked at a strip club? Yes No

Finally, I would like to compare if responses differ between men and women, please indicate your gender below:

Male Female

REFERENCES

- Allen, A. (2001). Pornography and power. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 32, 512-531.
- Angermeyer, M. C. & Matschinger, H. (2005). Labeling-stereotype-discrimination: An investigation of the stigma process. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 40, 391-395.
- Barton, B. (2002). Dancing on the Mobius strip: Challenging the sex war paradigm. *Gender and Society*, 1, 585-602.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. New York: Free Press.
- Boles, J., & Garbin, A. P. (1974). The strip club and stripper-customer patterns of interaction. *Sociology and Social Research*, 58, 136-144.
- Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame, and reintegration*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Corrigan, P. (2004). How stigma interferes with mental health care. *American Psychologist*, 59, 614-625.
- Corrigan, P., Markowitz, F. E., Watson, A., Rowan, D., & Kubiak, M. A. (2003). An attribution model of public discrimination towards persons with mental illness. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44, 162-179.
- Corrigan, P. W. & Penn, D. L. (1999). Lessons from social psychology on discrediting psychiatric stigma. *American Psychologist*, 54, 765-776.
- Couture, S. M. & Penn, D. L. (2003). Interpersonal contact and the stigma of mental illness: A review of the literature. *Journal of Mental Health*, 12, 291-305.
- Egan, R. D. (2003). I'll be your fantasy girl, if you'll be my money man: Mapping desire, fantasy and power in two exotic dance clubs. *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 109-120.
- Enck, G. E., & Preston, J. D. (1988). Counterfeit intimacy: A dramaturgical analysis of an erotic performance. *Deviant Behavior*, 9, 369-381.
- Erickson, D. J., & Tewksbury, R. (2000). The "gentlemen" in the club: A typology of strip club patrons. *Deviant Behavior*, 21, 271-293.
- Forsyth, C. J., & Deshotels, T. H. (1997). The occupational milieu of the nude dancer. *Deviant Behavior*, 18, 125-142.

- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Link, B. G., Cullen, F.T., Frank, J., & Wozniak, J. F. (1987). The social rejection of former mental patients: Understanding why labels matter. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92, 1461-1500.
- Link, B. G., Cullen, F. T., Struening, E., Shrout, P. E., & Dohrenwend, B. P. (1989). A modified labeling theory approach to mental disorders: An empirical assessment. *American Sociological Review*, 54, 400-423.
- Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. C. (2001). Conceptualizing stigma. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 363-85.
- Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. C. (2006). Stigma and its public health implications. *Lancet*, 367, 528-529.
- Liska, A. E., & Messner, S. F. (1999). *Perspectives in crime and deviance* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Mestemacher, R. A., & Roberti, J. W. (2004). Qualitative analysis of vocational choice: A collective case study of strippers. *Deviant Behavior*, 25, 43-65.
- Murphy, A. G. (2003). The dialectical gaze: Exploring the subject-object tension in the performances of women who strip. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 32, 305-335.
- Overall, C. (1992). What's wrong with prostitution? Evaluating sex work. *Signs*, 17, 705-724.
- Pasko, L. (2002). Naked power: The practice of stripping as a confidence game. *Sexualities*, 5, 49-66.
- Pearlin, L. I. (1999). Stress and mental health: A conceptual overview. In A. V. Horwitz & T. L. Scheid (Eds.), *A handbook for the study of mental health: Social contexts, theories, and systems* (pp. 161-175). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ronai, C. R., & Cross, R. (1998). Dancing with identity: Narrative resistance strategies of male and female strippers. *Deviant Behavior*, 19, 99-119.
- Ronai, C. R., & Ellis, C. (1989). Turn-ons for money: Interactional strategies of the table dancer. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18, 271-298.

- Rusch, N., Angermeyer, M. C., & Corrigan, P. W. (2005). Mental illness stigma: Concepts, consequences, and initiatives to reduce stigma. *European Psychiatry, 20*, 529-539.
- Scheff, T. J. (1966). *Being mentally ill: A sociological theory*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Schweitzer, D. (2001). Striptease: The art of spectacle and transgression. *Journal of Popular Culture, 34*, 65-75.
- Simons, R. L., Simons, L. G., & Wallace, L. E. (2004). *Families, delinquency, and crime*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
- Sweet, N., & Tewksbury, R. (2000). "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" Pathways to a career in striptease. *Sociological Spectrum, 20*, 325-343.
- Thompson, W. E., & Harred, J. L. (1992). Topless dancers: Managing stigma in a deviant occupation. *Deviant Behavior, 13*, 291-311.
- Thompson, W. E., Harred, J. L., & Burks, B. E. (2003). Managing the stigma of topless dancing: A decade later. *Deviant Behavior, 24*, 551-570.
- Wood, E. A. (2000). Working in the fantasy factory: The attention hypothesis and the enacting of masculine power in strip clubs. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 29*, 5-31.
- Wesely, J. K. (2003). "Where am I going to stop?": Exotic dancing, fluid body boundaries, and effects on identity. *Deviant Behavior, 24*, 483-503.
- Wright, E. R., Gronfein, W. P., & Owens, T. J. (2000). Deinstitutionalization, social rejection, and the self-esteem of former mental patients. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 41*, 68-90.