

https://dspace.org/

Sex workers gendered subjectivities: bodies, sexuality, love, and desire among sex workers in Hillbrow

Mahapa, Raisibe Matlhako

2014-11-05
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/15832

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND

Sex Workers Gendered Subjectivities:

Bodies, Sexuality, love, and desire among sex workers in Hillbrow.

RAISIBE MATLHAKO MAHAPA

679374

Master of Arts (Coursework and Research) in Development Studies.

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide an in-depth insight into sex workers' perceptions of their bodies, and their experiences and constructions of gender, sexuality, love, and desire within the sex work industry that is risk prone and criminalized. Gendered subjectivities are more complicated than the dominant research on sex work exposes especially when we consider Butler's conceptualization of the precarious 'nature' of life and the vulnerability of bodies. This paper argues that there is something valuable and 'touching' when exploring the complex ways in which the women in this study claimed autonomy over their selves and their bodies; and how they constructed and attached pride to their identities in a context where society 'denies' them dignity and objectifies them because of the 'deviant' work that they do. This is done by focusing on narratives from sex workers, who worked in Hillbrow, regarding their bodily experiences and the way that they perceive various roles that they play in their lives, particularly motherhood.

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION.

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is using another's work and to pretend that it is one's own.

2. I have used the Harvard system as the convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project/… from the work, or works of other people has been attributed and

   has cited and referenced.

3. This essay/report/project… is my own work.

4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

5. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was possible because of all the support and encouragement I received from my family, friends, and colleagues. I would like to thank to my supervisor, Professor Bridget Kenny, and the Development Studies team for supporting me and guiding me every step of the way. You understood my vision from the beginning and patiently pushed my thinking towards avenues I never thought I could reach.

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my mother; Ellen Mahapa, for being my role model, my rock and always believing in me. Mom thank you for always encouraging me to be the best that I can be and teaching us that there is always hope as long as we do not give up. I am what I am today because of all the sacrifices you and Daddy made to give me a bright future. To my father, Samson Mahapa, you taught me to never forget who I am, to be disciplined, and always stand my ground. I am forever indebted to you and Mommy for everything that you do for our family. A special thank you to my muses (the Moya team);Hlologelo, Lerato, Malesela, Tebogo and Thandi. My family is my life and I do not know what I would do without you guys. We walk on this rocky path of life together constantly guiding each other and carrying one another on our backs in order for us to reach our destination together.

Thank you to all my friends for all your support; visiting strip clubs with me, attending pole dancing classes, helping me land interviews with the Sex Workers, and never letting me give up especially throughout the writing process.

Finally, I would like to thank all the sex workers that took part in this study and allowed me to take a peek into their world. Thank you for opening up to me and trusting me. I hope that you find that I have made justice to your stories and let your personalities shine through as I promised.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: **5**

Introduction

Chapter 2: **16**

Methodology

Chapter 3: **26**

Literature Review

Chapter 4: **42**

Her Working Conditions.

Chapter 5: **62**

Pressures of the Mother Icon.

Chapter 6: **84**

Body Work Nexus.

Chapter 7: **104**

Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

What is the essence of a woman? What defines a woman? Is there such a thing as a 'good woman'? These are some of the questions that have guided the journey of my research. It has not been an easy experience trying to capture how sex workers deal with the politics of defining their identity and becoming comfortable with who they are or what they do. I began my field work being aware of the contentious nature of the sex work industry that was painted by much of the literature of sex work in South Africa. It is a dangerous industry characterized by violence, rape, HIV/AIDS prevalence, a survivalist mentality, and hopelessness (Manoek, 2012; Gould and Fick, 2008; Katbamna, 2010). Much of this research insisted on focusing on the biology of the body as it was based on a woman-as-seller and man-as-buyer model which reinforces essentialist hetero-normative gender logics tying sexual objectification to female bodies and sexual subjectivity to male bodies (Irigiray, 1985).

There are traces of violence within sex work and the women entered the industry because they felt like it was the only way for them to survive as they could make enough money to support their families. However, what I found and felt was neglected in the literature are elements that are beautiful in the 'enactment of body work' by sex workers as well as forms of behaviour that deserve to be celebrated and analysed in their own terms. The women in this study were not hopeless nor did they feel sorry for themselves in any way. They held their heads up high, worked hard to make the best of their situations and deal with the politics that came with the way that they were positioned in society. As feminist research on body work evolved, scholars became aware of the social nature of the body realising that biology does not sufficiently explain how the body is perceived in society.

Queer theory, which is adopted in post-structural feminist thought, points to the limitations of identity-based analysis as it contends that "individual desires, practices and affiliations cannot be accurately defined by the sex of object of choice" (Valocchi, 2005; 754). A sociological queer analysis uses elements of queer theory and sociological questions framed within the structure/agency debate to evaluate arguments for 'gendered identities' (Valocchi, 2005). It takes seriously Judith Butler's notions of seeing gender as a socially constructed performance and asks if it can be "extended beyond the conscious transgressions of sexual and gender norms to explain the adoption of our everyday gendered and sexualised selves. It also asks how we can incorporate an analysis of discursive power that operates subtly but pervasively into a discussion of gender and sexual power inequality that still recognises the material and political impact of social institutions" (Valocchi, 2005; 757). Taking this framework into consideration already shows the limitations of theories that tend to 'universalise' the experiences and identities of women.

I chose to focus on sex work because while every worker has to deal with issues of class, gender, race, and power inequalities, a sex worker has to deal with added social stigma, legal, and physical dangers which are specifically associated with their bodies in the world. We need to recognise the complexity of their gendered identities and see sex workers as subjects that are active members of society. In this light we need to analyse sex workers in a way that takes seriously their voices and their lives from their perspectives. The physical nature of their jobs brings up questions regarding how they perceive themselves, their bodies, and their work. It also necessitates a framework that aims to understand their social positioning and gendered identities in society.

Taking the complexity presented by a sociological queer theory analysis seriously is important in order to challenge the trend of activist organisations and policy makers to base their work on normalisation. These policy decisions protect and reproduce the status quo by constantly following the same direction based on assumptions about the nature of body work that does not consider it from the workers perspectives. This tendency misses the complexity and the politics involved in sex work. Viewing and understanding sex work from these women's perspectives and embodied experiences begins to challenge norms about sexuality, bodies, and gender identities. Identity formation is a process that is contradictory, political, and occurs within a wider discourse that functions to construct the order of society.

Sex work is a global industry that is dominated by women and is characterised by alarming rates of abuse and violence. The violent nature of sex work has increasingly been a global issue of concern (Gould & Fick, 2008; Manoek, 2012, Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003). The build up toward the 2010 FIFA world cup in South Africa brought the debate about decriminalising sex work to the forefront of the country's political debate. True social change and empowerment requires a movement that takes seriously and sees the value in understanding difference and embracing 'peculiarity'. This signifies the importance to take seriously the voices of sex workers and calls for an evacuation of a world that seeks and insists on sameness.

My experience during the process of this research was life changing, fascinating, overwhelming, emotional, as well as eye opening. What follows is a narrative that aims to provide an in-depth insight into sex workers' perceptions of their bodies, and their experiences, and constructions of gender, sexuality, love and desire within the work industry that is risk prone and criminalized. The report is based on findings from participant

observation (ethnography) and semi-structured interviews conducted in two 'adult entertainment centres' in an area called Hillbrow which is situated in central Johannesburg. One strip club called 'The Ghetto'[1] catered for lower income earners and the other called 'Burb Livin' was more for the middle class market[i]. This research is not a comparative study of the two establishments as I could not spend sufficient time in 'The Ghetto' for safety reasons, however the time I spent in both establishments is crucial for the ethnography.

The term 'sex worker' is used in this research to describe women who participated in this study and engaged in providing sex for money at the time of this research[2]. I chose to refer to my participants as sex workers instead of prostitutes because the majority of my participants identified themselves first and fore-most as dancers and entertainers and then as prostitutes, and they also embraced the fact that they were in the business of selling sex. This paper is interested in exploring firstly **how sex workers perceive themselves, their bodies, and their work** and secondly **how they understand their social positioning and engendered identities in society.** This will be done by examining how they understand and position the character and nature of their work, how they talk about and experience their bodies, and how they give meanings and value to different relationships in their lives, primarily focusing on their roles as mothers. Using narratives from sex workers that I engaged with in various ways about how they perceive their bodies, careers, and relationships; I argue that there are 'touching moments' in their lives that other women can learn from and that deserve to be celebrated and explored.

[1] The Ghetto and all other names used in this research are pseudonyms because I promised my participants full anonymity.

[2] There are differentiating categories of sex workers; for instance there are informal sex workers, commercial sex workers, survival sex workers, escorts, call girls, and so on. However the sex workers in this research sold sex commercially for various reasons and under a range of conditions therefore cannot be clustered under any one distinguished category of sex work.

Marek Korczynski (2013; 29) argued that "beauty lies primarily in the way that workers skilfully reclaim dignity, sometimes for themselves and sometimes for the service-recipient just where the tensions and contradictions of body work interactions are at their most intense". He labelled these points of beauty 'touching moments' and emphasised that it is crucial to keep in mind that they are underlined by a common social structure.

SOME BACKGROUND: VISUALISING THE CLUBS.

I visited two strip clubs with different target markets for the purposes of this research. This section aims to provide a description of the settings of the clubs to illuminate the differences between the two clubs.

THE GHETTO

The Ghetto is situated at the corner of two streets in Hillbrow. It is surrounded by flats and small supermarket stores. There was a hawker selling cigarettes and sweets on the opposite side of the road (this is usually a disguise for selling marijuana~~weed~~), ~~-~~ and there is a casino that is also an adult entertainment centre one block away from the club. There is no parking designated for the hotel guests. Guests parallel park on the side of the road. The entrance lobby had a list of entrance prices at the various hours and a reception table for entrance fee collections. It had very dim lighting and there were two separate sides that were divided by the reception area.

The left side had a bar area with high wooden tables and chairs and game slot machines. When you walked into this room on the left side you found the bar which was stocked mainly with beer and ciders and a few spirits. There were women working behind the bar and women who were sitting around the bar waiting for clients to approach them and scouting for

potential customers to approach. Other sex workers were walking around the bar approaching potential clients. The approach was sometimes just a whisper in the ear or some women would approach a man and just grab onto his penis and start massaging him to get him horny and convince him to 'buy a round'.

On the right side of the reception area was the club area. This room had a few plastic tables and chairs situated by the walls of the room. The DJ booth was situated on the right side of the room and there was a stage was in the centre of the room. The stage area was not elevated; it was a circle with a wooden floor and a vertical strip pole in the centre of the circle, the rest of the club had a cement floor. The other end of the room had another bar which was also stocked with mostly beers and ciders and some spirits. This side of the club was very loud and there was a strip show every half an hour. At the end of the show the DJ called on any man who "is man enough" to go on stage and "fuck this beautiful lady" for free. This did not happen at the end of every single show, but it happened frequently.

If a man came on stage, the 'stripper' would give him a lap dance, take his clothes off once he was erect, put a condom on his penis and then she would bend over. Then the man had sex with the woman on the stage in front of the crowd. If the man went through with it he would receive congratulatory chants from the male crowd. On the other hand, if he did not follow through after walking on stage he was made fun of as he was deemed not 'man enough'. The crowd consisted mostly of males and the only women who were there (apart from me) were selling, therefore, my outsider status was evident.

The women who worked in this hotel paid R90 for rent to the hotel owner every day in order to do their business in the establishment. There were two women who lived in each room. It

had a bar/strip club in the 'lobby' where the women found clients to take upstairs. The sex workers charged the clients a standard fee of R50 for thirty minutes with them in their room which was upstairs. This meant that the women must have a minimum of two clients per day in order to make rent. The brothel was not always busy; weekdays especially Tuesdays were slow meaning it was hard for the girls to find clients on those days. Some weekends were also quiet, especially the weekend before the end of the month (pay day).

This hotel charged men an entrance fee of R20 during the day (off-peak hours) and R40 during on peak hours (11pm-2am). Women entered the club for free. The sex workers who stayed in 'The Ghetto' were only allowed visitors for 30 minutes at a time no matter the time of day or the reason for the visit. According to the rules set by the manager/owner of the hotel, men were not allowed upstairs with the women under any circumstances unless they paid the R50 fee. Female visitors were allowed upstairs visits for a maximum time of 30 minutes with no charge. The women who worked in this hotel had no say in terms of what rates they charged; there was a standard set rate of R50 for every 30 minutes you spend upstairs with a woman. The only time they had control over the amount they charged was when they had overnight clients (at the client's place or another dwelling outside the hotel). They chose their own working hours or days as long as they paid their daily rent.

BURB LIVIN'

'Burb Livin' was also based in Hillbrow however it catered more for the middle to upper class crowd. It provided 24 hour secure parking in a parking lot opposite the hotel where there were guards who were there to watch the cars as well as escort guests from the parking lot to the hotel. The reception area for the hotel was situated on the ground floor and the strip club was on the first floor. The reception area was responsible for hotel bookings and hotel

admin. There were no fancy decorations by the reception. It had wooden floors and oak walls. The male receptionist(s) sat behind a counter behind a glass covering. Behind the receptionist desk was a fairly spacious area with another table with a computer. This area also had two ATMs, a Standard Bank and an Absa ATM, for withdrawals as the hotel and the club only accepted cash. There was a door that led to the staircase and the elevators. Visitors got searched for any weapons or alcohol before they could enter that area. The club was situated on the first floor of the hotel; the entire building had eleven floors. The second floor was where the offices and the gym area were and the rest of the floors where hotel rooms that were for rent at a rate of R250 per night. The club charged an entrance fee of R50 for women and R90-R100 for men depending on the time of day and the day of the week. It was R90 during the week and R100 during weekends.

The club floor had different sections/rooms; the main club area which the ladies referred to as 'the ladies corner', the games room, and the 'VIP' room for private parties. The main club area had a stage, two bars at opposite ends of the room, and tables surrounding the stage. Some of the tables had strip poles in the centre. The main stage was a wooden stage and it had two vertical poles and a horizontal pole in between the two poles. The 'ladies corner' was a section of the club where clients went if they were looking for a more relaxed atmosphere; this section did not have music as loud as the main club section and it had couches and dancing poles in between the different couch sections. The 'ladies corner' had an opening that lead to the games room which had pool tables, various game slot machines, and a bar area.

The third section of the club was the private room that was available for rental for private parties at R9000 per hour; the R9000 comes with entertainment from two ladies of your

choice and the guests in this section where allowed to touch the ladies when they were on stage. Guests were not allowed to touch the ladies in the main club areas unless the woman invited the men to touch her. There were bouncers in the club that were looking out for the ladies. The private section was where the small rooms for private dances/sessions were situated. The small rooms had one three sitter couch by the wall, a dancing pole in the centre of the room, and two ottomans on either sides of the pole.

The lighting in the main club was dim but not dark, with different colour spot lights on the stage during performances. When the main dancers where on stage, clouds of scented smoke would be blown out from the stage. The lighting in the ladies corner and games room was not as dim as the other areas, and the lighting in the VIP room was also dim.

Burb Livin' had different groups of dancers and employed women of all shapes and sizes. There were also women of different races who worked there. The different categories were based on the dancing skills of the ladies. There were the Burb Girls who were highly skilled pole dancers and were permanently employed as resident pole dancers; these women did individual shows, or would share the stage with one or two other women. This depended on the theme of the dance. When there were two ladies dancing, they would dance around the stage doing various moves on the poles and on the floor. They would then dance with each other in a way that enacted different sex positions, i.e. Doggy Style, Reverse Cowgirl, Missionary, and so on. The Burb Girls performed with dildos of various shapes, sizes, and colours. Each girl brought her own dancing pack on stage which had a dildo(s), a spraying tube with water, and any other props that they were to use during the performance. They wore different sexy and very revealing outfits depending on the theme of the dance, i.e. police officer lingerie, nurse, pilot, and so on. They danced around the stage and on the poles and

then striped until they were completely naked. They also interacted with people who were sitting around the stage. The stage is surrounded with ottomans for a close view of the performances.

Once they were completely naked, they put the dildos into their vaginas and danced sexually enacting sex moves. They would do this whether it was an individual or partner performance. If it was an individual dance she danced as if she was pleasuring herself and when there was more than one they would dance next to and on each other as if they were having sex with each other. They did all of this with their dildos inside their vagina, playing with it in a way that signalled a penis thrusting. Sometimes some of the ladies would approach someone sitting around the stage, and give them the dildo so they could put it inside of them. Males and females went to Burb Livin so the crowd in the club and around the stage consisted of male and females, and people of different races.

The other groups consisted of the other ladies who were employed on a casual basis. If you want to work for Burb Livin, you approach the manager and if they are looking for girls at that time they provide you with uniform and you start working. You start on a casual basis and if you are good at dancing and a crowd favourite, you could eventually become a resident dancer. If you are really good and the crowd loves you eventually you could become a Burb Girl. All the Burb Girls had toned bodies, not necessarily skinny but they looked very fit; which is understandable given how much fitness, flexibility, and physical strength it takes to be a 'professional' pole dancer.

The other girls would dance in groups of about 8-10 and they took to the stage when in between the Burb Girls shows. The different categories of dancers wore different uniforms.

The other dancers wore pink and yellow uniforms while Burb girls wore different outfits. These girls did not dance with any props or have any specific routines. They would take to the stage and dance in whatever way they wanted that was 'sexy' and 'seductive'. The girls here seemed to have formed a kind of community. When there were ladies dancing on stage, the other ones would be on the floor seducing men and trying to get them to tip the ladies who were dancing on stage.

This report presents a narrative of sex workers that aims to illustrate the politics of identity formation by taking seriously the way that these sex workers perceive their gendered identities. The next section provides a description of the research methodology and process. Chapter three aims to outline literature and work that served as the basis of the analysis in this report. Chapter four provides a look into the work conditions and work lives of these sex workers. Chapter five focuses on the body work nexus and argues that the sex worker's body is a complex body with complex embodied identities that mean different things to the women in this study depending on what they do with the body at that time. Chapter six is focused on the 'mother role' and argues that the pressures imposed on women to aspire to prescribed dignities of the strong mother, which ignore the burdens of motherhood through insisting on a super woman persona, elucidates a frame that is useful when conceptualising maternal love and the profundity of the value that the women in my study placed on their roles as mothers.

Taking the way that these women understand their gendered identities seriously illustrates that; life and the way that we understand reality is a precarious and contradictory process that is constructed by our various experiences and the way that we are positioned in society. To understand the complexity of gendered constructions we need to keep in mind the fact that there are power relations that are constantly at play in the wider society that we exist in.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of my research was to explore how sex workers understood their gendered identities therefore it was focused on understanding how they behaved and communicated in various spaces that they occupied in their lives. It was a research project based on exploring the subjective experiences of these sex workers, therefore no claims of objectivity can be made when considering the offerings of this paper. Silverman (2004) outlined that it is important to be aware that research aimed at gaining an understanding of a particular subject offers a peek into that person's own representation of their experience therefore it is important to consider the type of methodology that one employs in designing the research.

The primary interest of my research necessitated the use of different qualitative research methods. Qualitative research is a "scientific research approach that seeks to understand a given research topic or problem from the perspective of the local population it involves. It is especially efficient in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations" (www.ccs.neu.edu,accessed 15/11/2013). This approach allows researchers to get insight into human behaviours, opinions, and beliefs which are often complex and contradictory. Qualitative research methods are also effective in "identifying intangible factors such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose role in the research issue may not be readily apparent" (www.ccs.neu.edu, accessed 15/11/ 2013).

I collected data by doing participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews give the participants space to express themselves the way that they see fit. Longhurst (2003; 105) outlined that "Although the researcher prepares a list of pre-determined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues that they feel are important". My research necessitated the use of qualitative methods due to its sensitive nature in that it was focused on queering gender, sexuality, and identities. This required an understanding and sensitivity to the variety of lived social experiences and subjectivities of individuals; as well as "the social settings within which these experiences and subjectivities take shape, and to the larger cultural discursive, and institutional contexts of these lives where resources are located, images created, and taxonomies are given power" (Valocchi, 2005: 767).

When conducting ethnographic research, a researcher enters a certain space in order to learn what goes on in that vicinity. It is an approach that is used to understand and learn about the cultures of various groups of people, institutions, and other settings (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The foundation of ethnographic research is based on the notion that human behaviour and the way that people make sense of their world is highly variable as everything that happens in their world is localised and context specific (LeCompte et al., 1999). What this method emphasises is the need to find out what people actually do, how they do it, and why they do it before assigning any sort of interpretations based on personal experience, academic expertise, or professional disciplines (LeCompte et al., 1999).

Ethnographic data is collected by systematically 'recording' information in various ways by paying attention to what one sees and hears and how things in that space are done in order to learn the meanings that people attach to the things that they do (LeCompte et al., 1999).Doing

participant observation meant being embedded in the action and context of a social setting. There are three key elements of a participant observation study: "Getting into the location of whatever aspect of the human experience you wish to study; building rapport with the participants; and spending enough time interacting to get the needed data" (Guest, Namey & Mitchell (2013; 76) . Participant observation in a way requires the researcher to 'get into bed' with participants. Not literally, but for it to be effective it was important for me to establish a significant level of rapport and trust with the workers in the vicinity.

I did not have much exposure to the sex work industry when I first started my research. I had only read up on the nature of the industry as there is vast information that is published regarding the world of sex work especially during the build up to the 2010 soccer world cup. It was therefore crucial for me to gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the culture(s) within the establishments where I collected my information.

I had initially planned to cover two strip clubs that were of different class brackets (low class and high class) in order to get some sort of range in terms of the type of women I studied because then, I suggested, the women would be of different income levels. However, I could not get access to high-end sex workers because the research costs would have been too much for me as they are usually found in expensive establishments in terms of entrance fees, and so on.

I wanted a degree of comparison to be present in my findings to gage whether or not there was a difference of perceptions between women of different classes. Comparative research methods are useful for the researcher as they provide a platform to determine whether similar causes can be used to explain shared phenomena (Hantrais & Mangen, 1995). I also could not

get as much information as I wanted about the environment in low class establishments because when I started my field work and visited a low class club (the Ghetto), the women were very hostile towards me, the men were aggressive and I did not feel like it was a safe place for a young woman like me to be alone in. I then moved on to another establishment called Burb Livin which caters for the more middle class crowd. I did spend a little time in The Ghetto, and therefore managed to get a limited element of comparison as the bulk of the research was based in Burb Livin.

I initially visited The Ghetto with a friend of mine who was familiar with those types of spaces; however, he was not available following those two visits to accompany me to the establishment. We had visited The Ghetto because he was friends with one of the girls who worked as a sex worker there. We went there so I could meet her. Her name was Beauty and she was one of the women whom I interviewed. We did not find her the first time we visited, but I met her the second time we went there. I tried to find another male friend willing to go with me, but it proved difficult as most of my friends were employed.

Beauty was very nice to me and we formed a good relationship; however, when I asked her if she would be able to look out for me if I was to spend time in the brothel, she advised me against it because she said she was not exactly liked by the other girls and they could get very violent towards me. We (my friend and I) also approached the brothel manager and attempted to get consent from him to conduct research in his hotel however he was very hostile to the suggestion. After further 'conversations', he was 'open' to my request provided that I give him a significant monetary incentive. Following these series of conversations, I decided for my own safety and for ethical reasons, to stick to conducting research in the more 'middle' class strip club.

I did about 9 site visits at Burb Livin and only went to The Ghetto twice. The time I spent at the site each day varied. I visited 'The Ghetto' during the day at both times but Burb Livin' I visited mostly in the evening between 8pm-2am. There were two occasions when I visited Burb Livin' at midday. I spent approximately 1-2 hours each visit at The Ghetto but I would stay at Burb Livin for about 3-6 hours each visit. All of my participants for this research, except for Beauty worked at Burb Livin. Beauty worked at the The Ghetto.

The purpose of the first few visits to the clubs was to get an understanding of the type of environment that I was entering into. The participant observation involved me being immersed in the space observing activities in the establishment. I would go to the club and sit at the bar or grab a table, get something to drink and observe the girls. Most of the time, I took a friend along so I could blend in better. It stands out if a girl goes to the strip club and sits there alone. I also spent time attending their 'gym' (pole dancing) classes and listening to and engaging in 'ordinary girl talk' in the female toilets.

Spending time as an observer in the club created familiarity with the workers. I was able to rid any suspicions that they may have had regarding my intentions. This made them more receptive to the idea that I was a young student researcher just looking to know more about them for my research purposes. Through this familiarity that was created I managed to attend fitness classes in the hotel that some of the sex workers attended. They had pole dancing lessons three times a week and I was able to attend some of those sessions with the workers which enabled me to observe the women in a different space that was not in the club setting. The pole dancing classes were offered for free to the girls by one of lead pole dancers who

were employed by Burb Livin, and they were voluntary and were meant to be a fun active space.

As the research focused on how sex workers perceived their gendered identities, I had proposed approximately six to eight in-depth interviews with sex workers. However in research the field experience tends to prove unpredictable and one does not always get what he/she expected or proposed. Therefore I ended up with only five interviews. When I was in the proposal stages of my research I had established various contacts that were to get me access to different levels of sex workers (low-middle-high class). However, for various reasons most of those networks did not materialise, and I had to find other ways to gain access to participants.

My spending a lot of hours just visiting the strip club helped me gain access to women who were willing to do interviews. The women noticed that I was a frequenter at the club and some of them became comfortable to speak to me. Some of them were the ones that sparked conversations with me. I think my being a woman who spent so much time at that strip club was something they were not used to therefore some of them became curious and wanted to know why I was there so much. I interviewed women who came across as friendly and receptive to having conversations with me about their work when I approached them. I decided to have conversations with these women specifically because I needed to probe 'intimate' details of their lives. One of the main factors I had to consider was that not all of the strippers in the club engaged in prostitution therefore it was crucial for me to observe and to get an idea of who was selling or not.

It was also difficult to find women who were willing to do interviews outside of work or when they were not working because they worked long hours and had a lot of things to do

with the little ‘spare time’ that they had. Therefore most of the women who I approached were willing to have conversations with me about themselves and their work in the club while they were sitting around having a drink and perhaps waiting for their turn to hit the stage or while they were ‘looking’ for clients, rather than meeting me outside their work hours. In fact two of my participants opted for me to interview them at the club bar during the earlier hours of the afternoon as they were willing to speak to me while they were at least around the bar area in case they got a client.

‘Data Collection.’

This study utilised semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I conducted five semi-structured interviews. I was only able to audio record four of the interviews as the other interview occurred in the club where music was too loud, and I had to rely on note taking using my phone. I conducted the interview in the club because she also seemed uneasy when I suggested that we move to a quieter place in the club so we could speak properly. The interviews were approximately an hour to an hour and a half.

When I did use my phone, I could not take extensive notes during the interviews because I wanted to maintain the informality of the conversation that felt like a conversation between friends. I also felt like the participants in the research felt more at ease when they saw that I was paying full attention and was completely interested in what they had to say. Therefore I wrote down a few key words when I could steal a moment during the interview. I would then note down what I could remember immediately after the conversation on the notebook in my phone. I also audio recorded voice notes of me using my cell phone when I got into my car before I drove home. I did this because I could record more extensively everything I remembered than I could type on my phone inside the club.

I asked for consent from the participants before conducting the interviews, and I ensured that they knew exactly what I was doing and what my intentions were. I tried to write down my field notes as soon as I could when I got home however sometimes I was too tired, given the hours I had to spend in the field, to write extensive field notes immediately afterwards. However I would write them out the next day.

'Data Analysis'.

I used thematic content analysis to analyse data collected from the participants. Thematic content analysis was utilised because my research was of a qualitative nature. Babbie & Mouton (2001) suggested that content analysis is best suited for studying communications because what is said, how it is said, and with what effect it is said is important in discovering what is being researched. Thematic content analysis entails identifying and recording patterns that are important and that stand out in terms of answering the research question (Babbie et al., 2001). These themes changed throughout the analysis process as more data is collected and coded. The data analysis process involved becoming familiar with the data through constantly engaging with it, weaving out initial codes that were constantly redefined and changed, searching for themes inside the main codes set out, which led to the final findings of the report.

In other words, thematic content analysis is a combination of open, axial, and selective coding which occurs after the data has been transcribed throughout the research process (Babbie et al., 2001). Open coding involved reading my data and organising it into different sections; then, axial coding involved looking for relationships and links between the different codes; and finally, selective coding entailed defining the main variables then going through

all the data again to see what about the data related to those variables (Babbie et al., 2001). I ended up with three main themes which made up the bulk of the research findings. These themes which had various sub-themes were: work and the promise of big city lights, bodily image(s) and motherhood/womanhood.

'Ethical Considerations'.

Sex workers are a group of people that are considered 'vulnerable' due to the nature of their work. Therefore it was crucial for me to be conscious of any ethical issues that might arise throughout the process of this research. Sex work is a sensitive issue in South Africa that needs to be 'handled' with great care; therefore, it was of utter importance for me to ensure anonymity and to make sure that I was not putting the participants or myself into any type of danger at any point throughout my research. The data that I collected for this research was kept on my laptop which was password protected, and it was stored using pseudonyms.

I did not use any identifying features in the recording of the data as I promised the participants full anonymity. I ensured my participants that I would not be naming them or the place where they worked because some of them feared that they might somehow be picked out if I mentioned the place of their work. Hence my research sites are also identified using pseudonyms.

The interviews were only conducted once I received ethical clearance from the University of Witwatersrand after handing in an ethical clearance form that had to illustrate the fact that I thought through the ethical implications of my type of research and I had measures in place to deal with them.

I drafted a proposed participant information sheet which had details of what my study was about and my contact details as well as my supervisor's contact details. I also explained verbally to them what the research was about. The interviews were conducted only after I received full consent from the participants and I assured them that all the data will be stored in my personal computer which had a password and that only I and possibly my supervisor will have access to the raw data. I also deleted all the data off my phone as soon as I transferred it to my laptop.

The participants gave me verbal consent which allowed me to sign on their behalf that they agreed to the interview and the recordings. I told them all the details about the research and allowed them to ask questions, and that pseudonyms would be used throughout the research process. The participants were also informed that once the research was completed it would be published on the Wits website as well as the possibility of it being published for other academia purposes.

Due to the sensitive nature of their work, I was aware that certain traumatising events could be brought up within our discussions, therefore I had prepared a referral sheet where I arranged different emergency and counselling contact details in case the workers needed it. Fortunately nothing of this nature occurred during my research that I was made aware of. All my participants were provided with a copy of the referral sheet. I was also conscious of the fact that I could also find myself in difficult situations that are emotionally traumatising for me, therefore I also had access to a psychologist and my supervisor was always available for me to de-brief.

CHAPTER 3- LITERARTURE REVIEW.

South African studies of sex work

The bulk of research that has been done on sex work(ers) in South Africa has focused on the nature of the field of sex work which has contributed significantly to revealing details of the diversification of the sex work industry and understanding how the sex work industry operates (Woljcicki, 2002; Gould and Fick, 2008; Manoek, 2012). The South African National Aids Council (SANAC) commissioned a sex worker size estimation study in the year 2013 in order to provide more accurate figures to improve the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS intervention programmes. They found that there was an average of approximately 153 000 sex workers in South Africa of which 138 000 (90%) were female, 7000 (6%) of them were male and 6000 (4%) of them were transgendered (SANAC, 2013). The study estimated that a median of approximately 32000 sex workers operated in the Gauteng province of which 80% were based in the cities of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, and Tshwane (SANAC, 2013).

There has been an increasing need to better understand sex work in South Africa especially because of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. "It has been found that sex workers are highly vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) due to multiple factors, including large numbers of sex partners, unsafe working conditions, and barriers to the negotiation of consistent condom use. Moreover, sex workers often have little control over these factors because of social marginalisation and the restricted legal framework under which they are forced to work. Alcohol, drug use, and violence further exacerbate their vulnerability and risk" (SANAC, 2013; 3).

Research of this nature is imperative as it is crucial to take measures that improve the health status of sex workers. However the consistent focus on sex work and susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases, viruses, and infections has resulted in sex workers being 'blamed' for the HIV/AIDs pandemic based on the 'fact' that they have multiple sexual partners. Sex work research in South Africa has mostly been concerned with the health implications of sex work, and fighting for legal reform of the law based on the premise that criminalisation of sex work infringes on the constitutional human rights of people who 'choose' to enter the sex work industry for various reasons.

South Africa has over the years been seeing increased activist activity speaking out in support of decriminalising sex work. Sex work activist organisations such as the Sex Work Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) and Sisonke Gender Justice are becoming more present and powerful as they are managing to make a significant noise and uproar in their fight against the criminalisation of sex work. The South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) has been reviewing legislation on sex work for a few years and they are being put under increased pressure to make firm recommendations. The SALRC is commissioned "to do research with reference to all branches of the law in order to make recommendations to Government for the development, improvement, modernisation or reform of the law. The Commission investigates matters appearing on a programme approved by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development". (www.justice.gov.za/salrc/, accessed 10/12/2013).

Woljcicki(2002) investigated the violence experienced by women who engaged in the practice of survival sex in the taverns of Soweto and Hammanskraal area in South Africa. She used the term 'survival sex' to emphasise the economic element that influenced women's decisions to "engage in sex-for-money-exchange" (Woljcicki, 2002; 268). The study found

that the communities where the taverns she studied were situated did not see women who engaged in survival sex as sex workers nor did the women see themselves as sex workers (Woljcicki, 2002). This accentuates the extent of 'othering' that professional sex workers face and the importance of noting the context and variety of sex work and sex worker perceptions and experiences in society.

Woljcicki (2002) argued that patriarchy runs so deep in society that there seems to be little condemnation, within those communities, of acts of sexual violence on these women. The Sex Worker Education & Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT), Sisonke (a self-described "movement of sex workers, by sex workers"), and the Women's Legal Centre (WLC) released a study called, "Stop Harassing Us: Tackle Real Crime". This report draws on the views and voices of more than 300 sex workers in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Limpopo, all of whom approached the Women's Legal Centre (WLC) for information on their rights or legal assistance between September 2009 and July 2011 (Manoek, 2012). The report found that approximately 70% of sex workers have been abused by police. The main types of abuse included assault, harassment, arbitrary arrest, violation of procedures and standing orders, inhumane conditions of detention, unlawful profiling, exploitation, bribery and denial of access to justice (Turley, 2012).

Most of these arrests in themselves are unlawful because section 20(1)(Aa) of the 'Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957' which is the part that prohibits Sex Work makes it an offense to have unlawful carnal intercourse or commit an act of indecency with any other person for reward (Manoek, 2012). Manoek (2012; 6) argued that this "law effectively prohibits sex work but does not penalise "being" a sex worker, meaning a person cannot lawfully be arrested for being known as a Sex Worker but there has to at least be reasonable suspicion

that he or she has engaged in sexual intercourse or an indecent act for reward at a specified time with a specified person".

Section 11 0f Act 32 of 2007 regarding sexual offences and related matters, which was recently amended because of the Jordan case, addresses the criminality of clients (Manoek, 2012). *Jordan vs the State* was a petitioned appeal to decriminalize prostitution arguing that criminalization infringes on the constitutional rights of sex workers, including rights to privacy, to occupation, and to equal protection of the law regardless of gender (Leggett, 2002).

Jordan vs. the State was a case that involved the arrest of a brothel owner, brothel employee, and a sex worker who were convicted in the Magistrates' Court for contravening the Sexual Offences Act of 1957 (Southern African Legal Information Institute, 2002). They appealed the case in the high court arguing that the Act was unconstitutional as it infringed on human dignity, the right to economic freedom, and discriminated against gender equality. They therefore contended that it was unlawful for them to be convicted based on the provisions of the Act. Before it was amended, the Act prosecuted the brothel owner, worker, and the sex worker but prosecuted the customer only as an accomplice of the sex worker therefore promoting gender inequality and male bias. This resulted in the high court finding that that section of the Act was unconstitutional; however the appellants were still convicted in respect of the provisions of the Act that prohibited brothel keeping (SALII, 2002). Thereafter the Act was amended to prosecute the client at the same degree as the sex worker however not decriminalising sex work.

Section 11 now makes it an offence to reward someone over the age of 18 for a sexual act whether the act has been committed or not; regardless of this amendment, the 2011 South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics revealed that only 11 clients were convicted for buying sex but there were many arrests of sex workers during the same period (Manoek, 2012). This ridicules the rationale behind increasing efforts to enforce criminalization because it is apparently supposed to reduce demand and eliminate discriminatory practices; however, police target women and ignore their male clients. Realistically speaking, the laws create an environment where the police utilise intrusive and illegal policing practices, which severely violate sex workers' human rights, to make their arrests (Manoek, 2012).

The police officers rationalise their actions by dwelling on municipal by-laws that deal with loitering, drunken behaviour and soliciting for the purposes of prostitution (Manoek, 2012). The police actions still do not adhere to the legal procedures. According to the law, arrests should be the ultimate last resort; when a person has violated a by-law they have to receive a written warning, followed by a fine or a notice to appear in court if the person fails to adhere to the warning, and she/he should also be given an opportunity to make presentations if they feel the fine was unfairly issued.

Chandre Gould in collaboration with Nicole Fick (2008) conducted an in-depth study into the sex work industry in Cape Town. Their study was conducted on both indoor and outdoor industries and found that 0.03% of the Cape Town population work in the sex work industry. Their study included: formal (clubs or businesses easily identifiable as brothels), residential (houses in suburbs that are not easily identifiable as brothels), and informal brothels, as well as street sex workers. They found that sex workers are subject to exploitative or abusive working conditions.

However, few sex workers were forced to sell sex and most of them entered the industry 'rationally' given its earning potential. Their main argument was that sex work should be decriminalised because the unregulated nature of the industry, plentiful supply of exploitable labour, and differential power relations between sex workers and brothel owners and between clients and sex workers, are the driving forces behind the exploitation and abuse that characterise the industry. Most research on sex work in South Africa has focused on the violent relations that form part of their work, the hostile legal climate, and their 'exploitative' working conditions. However, the discourse of sex work functions within a wider political framework that is globally and locally complex and contradictory therefore it is important to analyse how feminist scholarship has dealt with sex work.

'From feminist theory and sex work to queer theory and bodies'.

Sex work has long been on the agenda of the feminist liberation movement and feminist studies and has caused conflicts and separation between individuals, feminists, and various groups and movements because of different views and perceptions. Very broadly, feminist theory "studies the social conditions of women in a sexist, 'male-stream' and patriarchal society, and enlightens people about taken-for-granted sexist practices and the gender-blindness of government and community practices (including publications) that displaced, ignored and silenced women, led to an unequal and discriminating social order, and held them captive for millennia" (Sarantakos, 1993; 54). The debate around sex work falls into two sides in feminist literature: on the one side is the argument for 'legalization' of prostitution based on the premise of 'harm minimisation', and on the other hand, a call for the eradication of demand for the industry through criminalisation with the underlying assumption that it will lead to the abolishment of prostitution (Sloan and Wahab, 2000).

Steward (2013) outlined that there has over time been a change of normative justification for criminalisation of sex workers. It started from protecting society from 'immorality', to prohibiting public nuisance, to criminalising because of the 'rife' and 'unacceptable' levels of exploitation in the prostitution industry (Steward, 2013). These changing justification trends were facilitated with policy shifts and characterised by the prevailing dominance of a patriarchal system[3].

Prostitution was initially rejected because a woman who engaged in sex work was seen as being immoral and dangerous to society. Then there was emphasis towards an assumed abuse of the worker by the employer; this shifted the risk onto the customer and employers (i.e. pimps and traffickers) (Steward, 2013). This woman then became perceived as someone who was vulnerable and needed the state to provide protection of her right not to be bodily violated and exploited (Steward, 2013). Throughout all these changes, the woman was seen as an object of the institution of prostitute.

Steward (2013) argued that criminalisation is a direct infringement of every human's constitutional right to liberty. However, most importantly labour laws in their current form "neglect relationships that are on the borders of production and social reproduction, and the influence of consumers and clients on work relationships" (Steward, 2013; 66). Labour laws do not possess an understanding of work based relationships nor do they take into account the inevitable effects of power differentials. Therefore Steward (2013) argues that resorting to criminal sanctions and an individualistic language of human rights to protect vulnerability in

[3] Patriarchy refers to the systematic organisation of life that is male biased and that has come to be understood and conceptualised as 'reality' and the 'natural' order of society (Walby, 1990).

working relationships is not necessarily a positive development as it denies the rationale of the 'nature' of power relations within work (Steward, 2013).

These critiques of the reliance on the law to regulate work relationships reveal the problematic that is in the constant focus on decriminalisation. These efforts equate liberation with law which is an insufficient and inaccurate assumption. Sex work cannot be treated like other work because the nature of the transaction involves a different kind of work relationship and brings into play more profound power relations. Furthermore, sex work brings to the forefront a direct battle against gender oppression which is more profound than any other type of discrimination because it is an oppression that characterises all centuries of history and life as we know it.

Research that aims to understand sex work and sex workers needs to take seriously the politics of the body. The foundation and the departure point of sex work research needs to come from theories that recognise that gender is a social construct as the body of the human is itself a social entity that is highly politicised and constructed and reconstructed in various ways by society (Butler, 2009; Valocchi; 2005, Cohen, Hardy, Sanders, Wolkowitz, 2013). Effective efforts that aim to change the status quo of an oppressive system must recognise that women are autonomous subjects and must aim to eradicate the assumption that we are a universal entity with a unified sense of identity (Weedon, 2000).

Postmodern feminist thought recognizes women as complex beings and embraces the extremely heterogeneous nature of humans who are gendered as female and male. They contend that categories such as `race`, `gender`, and `class` should be seen as plural, historically and socially specific (Weedon, 2000; Cornwall, 1997). Rational explanations,

theories, or understandings of gendered perceptions and positions should not be divided from experience, from oppression, from particularity or specificity, but should rather be based on it (Gross, 1992). Gross (1992) argued that the rise of the concept of the autonomous woman caused a lot of conflict and tension within feminist circles; however it is significant because it politicizes the process of 'liberating' the female from patriarchy. She argued that "autonomy implies the right to see oneself in whatever terms one chooses- which may or may not imply an integration or alliance with other groups and individuals" (Gross, 1992, 357).

Gayle Rubin (1997) argued that the inequality of the sexes should be understood within the sex/gender system. She defined the sex/gender system as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied" (Rubin, 1997; 170). She argued that every social activity occurs within a particular organization's structure therefore the oppression of women originates and functions within a social system and not biology (Rubin, 1997). Rubin (1997) highlighted the importance of context in trying to understand the complex relations within a particular society. She laid down her argument by outlining different types of kinship systems (some cultures allow bride wealth to be paid by the women which awards her the position of 'superiority') (Rubin, 1997). However in all contexts one was forced to choose between either a male or a female role; this refers to 'obligatory heterosexuality' (Rubin, 1997).

Seeing gender as performativity that is embodied de-legitimizes the dominant sex/gender system which currently conforms to patriarchal norms. The biological approach to gender development that ascribes the relationship between men and women as one that is 'simply' between private versus public spaces, oppressor and oppressed, perpetrator and victim, giver and receiver, depoliticizes the sex/gender system (Gatens, 1992). It does this by basing its

understanding of the body on the gender binary of woman (vagina) and man (penis) which ignores the malleability and materiality of the body. Furthermore instead of analysing society in a way that takes 'real' experiences seriously, it takes a view that essentialises the body as its foundation. Insisting on this foundation ignores the fact that gender identities are formed based on individual experiences and are affected by a larger social discourse. The process of identity formation is one that is highly political, contradictory, and complex as it is forever changing and directly influenced by life's occurrences..

The complex nature of the materialization of the body and social reality comes out in the various constituted differences of bodies that symbolize different things in different contexts. The sex workers' body is it itself a cultural symbol that has been constructed and shaped by the way that society views sex work. It is conceptualised as a representation of the epitome of a bad woman (Brents & Jackson, 2013; Douglas, 1966).

Butler (1993) argued that body materialism is a result of the discourse that produces the effects it names that are then perpetually normalized. Sex therefore is not a static condition of a body but is rather an outcome of materialization that is never complete because bodies do not 'fully' comply with the corporeality enforced (Butler, 1993). Sex is therefore given viability through various power struggles that have normalized the way it has come to be given legitimacy and seen as 'reality' (Butler, 1993). In this view then Butler (1993) emphasised that the dominant representation that sees gender and sex as separate entities is illogical. People conceptualise their existence by constructing and attaching meanings to structures. Therefore gender and bodies can take many forms as it is constructed in and by societies.

A look at history and the constructions and perceptions of cultures reveals changing 'patterns' that de-legitimise the biological understandings of gender development. Jay Clarkson (2005) analysed conflicting and competing discourses about gay masculinities in and about a television show called 'Bravo's Queer Eye'. He found that understandings of what it is to be masculine have changed overtime, moving from an emphasis of archetypes towards the market place man (Clarkson, 2005). The market place man refers to the man who has "the most toys" inferring to the man with the most money. This is a shift from 'traditional' notions of masculinity where emphasis of material assets was seen as a means to compensate for masculine shortcomings towards a culture where having more material assets forms part of being masculine (Clarkson, 2005). Traditional notions of masculinity were mostly based on physical strength and appearance; with modern capitalism such rigid categories of what constitutes masculinity have been blurred. These understandings of masculinity are affected by class categories because of modern capitalism pushing for consumer masculinity (Clarkson, 2005).

Placing emphasis on the redundancy of the biological understanding of gender development shows that the dominant understanding of the physical differences of the sexes itself is a symbol that is socially constructed. Therefore gender identity itself is symbolic and happens through performance because one performs their identity by doing (Butler, 1993). One then becomes that structure by performing an act repetitively which reveals that this structure itself is historical and constituted and can therefore change (Butler, 1993). This conceptualisation of gender as a performance then reveals that embodiment is not just about performing identity but also about linking it to one's physicality/biology.

A queer sociological analysis refers to an analysis that is aware of the performative embodiment and the social constructivism that constitute processes of identity formation. It takes seriously that "the enactment of identities is an accomplishment or performance, but these identities are also constrained by an array of forces that contribute to the power of heteronormativity" (Valocchi, 2005; 766). Therefore the 'fact' that gendered identities are socially constructed emphasises the complexity that characterises the way that identities are gendered, (re)constructed, and perceived by a person and by society. Analysis that takes seriously issues of embodiment, performativity, and how identities are gendered and internalised, provides crucial tools in humanising the lived experiences of sex workers in interrogating their positions in society.

'Sex work and intimacy'

Zelizer (2000, 818) posed the question "under what conditions, how, and with what conditions do people combine monetary transfers with intimate relationships?" In examining this question she stressed the importance of context in considering the complexity of relations involving intimacy and monetary or remunerative exchanges (Zelizer, 2000). Considering her findings that there are distinctively different types of intimate relations and payments, she argued that societal relations occur within wider specific structures that affect the way people interpret and internalize their social associations (Zelizer, 2000). Therefore before one can draw any assumptions or conclusions about a sex worker; she/he must make a concerted effort to understand the different positions and roles that the worker plays in her life, the different communities that she forms a part of, and the meanings that she attaches to the monetary and sexual transactions in a particular context.

Sex work is service work that involves 'emotional labour' in that it entails direct contact with service recipients and necessitates behavioural and emotional acts in order to meet the requirements of the job (Korczyncki, 2009). According to Hochschild (1983), who coined the term, as cited by Brent et al.(2013) emotional labour is ever present in service and care work and refers to the way that deploying emotions to perform a commoditised service affects one's sense of self.

Erenreich and Hochschild (2003) conceptualised the complexity of domestic work and argued that service work is different from other work because it specifically entails and requires emotional labour. The market of domestic work is one that is very complex as it exists in intimate spaces; this blurs the dominant lines drawn between the public and the private. It is a women worker dominated global industry that is characterized by exploitation, low wages, and on-going complex interrogations of roles as care worker and mother (Ally, 2009). Migrant care workers and their children have to deal with emotional strains caused by distance as well as the negative stigmas that are dominant in the society as a result of the traditional (male biased) norms prevalent and maintained by the media and sometimes the state (Parrenas, 2008). Ehrenreich et al. (2003) spoke of this as a worldwide gender revolution where service/care workers (especially migrant workers) get little attention because of racial discounting and the dominant traditional ideologies of private domains.

Ally (2009) stressed that merely formalizing work through state law depoliticizes the extremely political nature of service work industries as it maintains the status quo by reducing this work to a simple private relationship between women (Ally, 2009). Workers who work in service work can become alienated from their inner selves because the commodification of emotions shifts them from a space where they are authentically felt to a space where they are

sold (Hochschild, 2003). Once emotions are commodified it becomes hard for the worker to maintain personal genuine feelings (Hochschild, 2003).

Steve Vincent (2011) outlined that emotions at work are spontaneous and involuntary, may result from our choosing to reveal and suppress certain feelings, and are affected by our attitudes and moral beliefs which are influenced and shaped by culture which in turn constructs our sense of selves. Therefore emotional labour needs to be looked at historically considering the politics and power relations that are at play in the wider structure of society and the work place.

He argued that we need to consider the structure- agency relation when conceptualising emotional displays because it makes us aware of normative behaviours that can remain unnoticed or taken for granted (Vincent, 2011). In this sense historical relations of power and discourse have led to the formation of collective meaning systems that separate people according to their activities and interests thus constructing a normative order (Vincent, 2011). These groups of people then create certain images of themselves that reinforce a positive view of their activities by ignoring their disadvantages (Vincent, 2011).

Their need to construct 'worthy characters of their behaviours' results in an acceptance of "soft forms of domination or symbolic violence that legitimise and reproduce inequalities, reformulating outcomes as beneficial or even preferred in order to retain self respect and control" (Vincent, 2011; 1385). According to Vincent (2011) employees who do this kind of labour, such as sex workers, should be described as being 'emotionally skilled insiders' because they have to learn to adopt strategies to embody norms, values, and dispositions that

add value to themselves and their work according to the perceptions of higher organisational interests.

Sex work can be conceptualised as paid body labour/work because it involves activities in which sexuality is explicitly being sold. Body labour refers to work that "involves diagnosing, handling, and manipulating bodies that become the object of the workers' labour" (Twigg et al., 2011 as cited by Wolkowits, Cohen, Sanders, and Hardy; 2013). Sex work should be conceptualised as work on the physical, social, and cultural facets of one's own body and on the bodies of others. This is crucial in order to recognise that the body plays a significant role in social (re)production as it is incorporated within market relationships (Wolkowits et al, 2013).Body work then is a more useful concept when exploring sex work as service work because it pushes us further to get to the extremely complex character of this type of work. 'Emotional labour' does not take us far enough to understand the form of work that the worker enact.

It is important to recognise the complexity of bodies as particular objects of labour because of the social meaning of human bodies and the contexts (social, spatial and organisational) and constraints of situations in which they receive attention (Wolkowits et al., 2013). This focus elucidates the importance of examining sex workers lived experiences to gain insight into their social and tactile understandings of their bodies. Considerations need to be given to the effect of cultural understandings of the female body as 'passive yet sexual' versus the predatory sexually demanding male (Simpson, 2009 as cited by Wolkowits et al., 2013). This cultural understanding provides a particular incentive to sexualise the body that affects the way that the sexualised body is constructed and narrated.

The nature of sex work means sex workers have to deal with the 'enchanting myth of customer sovereignty' in being able to fulfil the 'goal' to embody desire; therefore they need to find ways to desexualise without undermining and taking away from greater physical and emotional intimacy (Wolkowits et al., 2013). Sex work commands an understanding of sexual meanings of the body because it directly calls on issues of desexualisation and sexualisation (Wolkowits et al., 2013). This understanding highlights the complexity involved in sex workers keeping or using their professional identity to overcome or neutralise social relations of feminine disempowerment (Wolkowits et al., 2013).

It is therefore crucial to view the sex worker, her 'work', and her body in a light that views the body as a social ontology and takes seriously power relations that are always at play in the wider discourse of the organisation of society. To do this we need to have an understanding of her history, experiences, and her perception of her gendered identity as this will allow us to get valuable insight into the 'reality' of her lived experiences. Her life story is filled with 'touching moments' that reveal various ways in which she skilfully reclaims the dignity that society robs from her.

These touching moments refer to the way in which she employed various mechanisms to bring the respect back into her work and her gendered identity (Korczynski, 2013). This framework reveals the political and contradictory nature of life and what we conceive as 'natural'. This is a necessary departure point in an effort to move away from the acceptance of the 'naturalness' of a male dominant system that is deeply embedded in society. It also reveals a more accurate image that provides conceptual explanations of the 'othering' of sex workers and their positioning as a 'un-grievable' population.

CHAPTER 4: HER WORKING CONDITIONS.

This chapter aims to outline the nature of working conditions that sex workers in this research faced. An examination of the work experiences of some of the women in this study elucidates the literature findings that speak to the presence of violence in this industry. However I also found that not all sex workers in this research felt like they were in danger or at risk while they were at work. Beauty who worked at the Ghetto is the only respondent who felt like she was in danger while she was at work, the other respondents who worked at Burb Livin felt safe and protected while they were at work. Christine Overall (1992) emphasised that we need not always assume that all sex workers work in dangerous situations because not all sex work is dangerous, coerced, does not consider the sex worker, or does not provide pleasure for the worker and the client.

Literature has revealed details about the violent and abusive characteristic of sex work which it has been argued is partly owed to the fact that it is criminalised in South Africa. The argument for decriminalisation is based on its proven ineffectiveness in terms of its objective to reduce demand and eliminate discriminatory practices whereby police target women and ignore their male clients. The laws in turn create a situation that opens up various avenues for abuse by police officers which are ironically supposed to protect its citizens (Manoek, 2012). This research argues that sex work should be decriminalised and emphasises that we should be focused on the wider political conditions and institutions through which material relations that position sex workers in a position that 'dehumanises' them operate. This is based on the

premise that it is these institutions that operate to rationalise continuance of this 'discrimination' and 'othering' of the population of sex workers.

There has been extensive research in South Africa that has outlined and showed that the majority of sex workers work in poor and dangerous conditions (Manoek, 2012). This has not only been owed to the criminalised status of their work but also to the complex nature of the unequal power relations between workers and clients that characterises this type of sexualised labour. The condition of the South African labour market with low literacy rates, high rates of unemployment, and low rates of education leave women with few options to make enough money to survive. When the African National Congress (ANC) came into power they reinforced the work-citizenship nexus by promising that they will provide jobs for the majority of South African citizens (Barchiessi, 2011). This meant that the promise of wage labour was the foundation of their election campaign (Barchiessi, 2011).

During their first tenure of being in power they introduced the Growth Employment Redistribution (GEAR) policy which was an economic development plan that was characterised by neo-liberal principles which included labour market flexibility, trade liberalisation, and privatisation (Barchiessi, 2011). GEAR was supposed to yield groundbreaking economic growth and more importantly it was supposed to create millions of jobs for South African citizens. The implementation of this neo-liberal growth path was a very political process that transformed the ways of life that workers were used to. This social transformation which resulted in a more precarious labour market brought about feelings of insecurity and desperation within workers because without stable jobs and wages, people are 'forced' to resort to survivalist measures in order to survive (Barchiessi, 2011).

Arrighi (1994: 2) noted that various theorists (Lomnitz 1988; Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989; Feige 1990; Portes 1994) argued that capitalism is characterised by a highly formalized and bureaucratic way of functioning, in terms of the legal regulation of income generating activities and the ever-increasing formalization of economic life, which has resulted in an 'unintended' tendency towards informalization. This means that this neo-liberal growth path to capitalist global development is "proliferating income generating activities that bypass legal regulation through one kind or another of 'personal' or 'familial' entrepreneurialism" (Arrighi, 1994; 2). This is because it is creating high levels of unemployment, discourages self-sustainable growth as it insists on wage labour, and it has created very high levels of poverty in South Africa. In this light people are forced to resort to survivalist measures, like sex work, in order to get money to survive (Barchiessi, 2011). This conceptualisation illustrates the power that the nation state has to regulate human life and the political order of society.

Lack of education and job opportunities 'force' people to work jobs that are often linked to very long hours, result in high levels of stress, and do not provide personal satisfaction, at much lower pay per hour compared to sex workers rates (Commission for Gender Equality, 2013). However "sex work differs in a crucial way from other forms of labour done by women, because it is predicated on the asymmetrical relationship of economic exchange between men and women, without which it cannot be sex *work"* (Commission for Gender Equality, 2013; 3). The commoditization of sex therefore involves the sexual activity as well as the buying and selling of it making it classist, ageist, and sexist (Commission for Gender Equality, 2013). It is classist in that the majority of women who join the industry are poor, uneducated, and desperate for a sufficient source of income (Manoek, 2012). It also tends to paint Black and Asian women as exotic and insatiable revealing racist connotations, and it is

ageist because some women are deemed too old to be sex workers while the young women are preyed upon (Commission for Gender Equality, 2013). Overall (1992) outlined that sex work is globally characterised by norms of heterosexuality and patriarchy in that men are mostly the bosses and it is mostly women who service men.

Lucas (2013; 47) argued the criminalisation of sex work also plays a part and was meant to discourage the young generation and women who were poor and from the working class from deviating from the norms of 'chastity, monogamy, hard work, and propriety'. The way that this law is implemented is racist to the black population because police only arrest sex workers who are on the street and do not focus on their colleagues who work in more high class establishments and who are often "white, more financially stable, less publicly visible and *considered* less 'offensive' to the public, and treated much more leniently (Lucas, 2013; 49).

'Their lived experiences in the work place.'

All my participants worked in brothels and did not express nor recall many times where they experienced police abuse. Beauty said that there had not been a police raid since she started working for the Ghetto however she heard some of the girls talking about an incident where police raided the establishment; she didn't know when it happened exactly but she said it was "a long time ago".

As I mentioned earlier I visited two establishments for the purpose of this research. The Ghetto only had black women who worked there. Most of the women there were not South African. Beauty said most of the women who worked at the Ghetto were from Zimbabwe but she was from Lesotho originally. Beauty and her mother moved to Johannesburg when she

was in her teens but she insisted that home was Lesotho and they visited there when they could. The manager was a Zimbabwean man. According to Beauty it would get very violent in there especially between the women; she said that their brawls sometimes got very physical to an extent that some of the women have stabbed each other or hit each other with bottles. She also said that sometimes they fought with the men too because there were times they didn't want to pay, or they wanted to force them to do something they do not want when they were in the room.

I formed a relationship with Beauty were I would call her on most days to speak to her about her day and what was going on in her life. During one of the conversations we had she told me that she changed rooms in the hotel because she was not getting along with the girl that she was sharing a room with. A few days after she had told me that they got into a fight I went to her work to see her. When I went to see her we would sit outside the hotel in my car. She still did not want to tell me the specific details in terms of what happened. She gave me general answers when I asked her, and it was clear to me that she did not want to talk about it.

The answer she gave me was:

> *"Eix mahlako you know this is not the easiest job to do, it is really hard and you need to be street wise and able to stand up for yourself if shit happens. When you share a space with other girls things tend to get tense and crazy, you end up having stupid fights over clients, cleaning, and other small things. And when there are fights here there are serious fights,* ***not like fights that you would have with your friends.*** *I mean sometimes they would fight with you that you stole their client; I mean what must I do if your client comes to me? So yeah... right now my hand is still sore and you can see my face is still a bit swollen. I don't*

know if I broke something or what is going on. So I haven't been able to work properly so I am behind with rent and now I needed double the rent because I needed to give the girl in the other room money.... if you move to a new room you pay those girls R100 so then you see now my rent was R190. I paid it off yesterday but now I have not paid rent for the past two days so I am R100 behind... I have not had money to buy food I had dry bread with water, it has been a slow week and all the money I have has to go to rent. (paraphrased)

Me: What happens if you do not pay rent*? You get kicked out and they take some of your stuff if you owe them money. They know how many clients you have so then you can't not pay your debt if you had clients (*paraphrased).

Beauty's work environment was very violent and dangerous. It seems like there was very limited protection that the hotel gave their workers. This came out when she said that they sometimes had to fight with their clients. She spoke about the violence in a very passive manner that showed that it was an ordinary occurrence to her; she spoke about it as if violence was an inevitable part of the job. Beauty referring to me and "the fights that I see" also inferred to her seeing me as coming from a higher class than her; therefore, she assumed that I had never been exposed to the kind of violence that she was referring to.

Indeed, on the first day that I went to The Ghetto some of the women there warned me that I better not make a scene if a man touches me 'inappropriately' and in an aggressive manner because I chose to walk into there and that is what happened to women because all the women that were there were selling. This emphasized that The Ghetto was a very violent and aggressive space.

The hotel also had control and surveillance mechanisms in place like keeping track of how many clients the workers had on a day. They had to report when they went upstairs with a client just like any visitor had to sign in before going upstairs. This was for regulatory as well as for a degree of safety reasons (I suppose). This experience of dangerous working conditions however was not universal. Not all my participants felt unsafe when they were at work.Burn Livin' offered a different working environment compared to the Ghetto. There were Black, Asian, and coloured girls employed at Burb Livin'. Interestingly, all the Black girls were inside the club working the stage and the crowd and the Asian looking girls were at the entrance waiting to take clients. This echoes CGE (2013)'s findings about the racist nature of sex work. The fact that only Black girls worked at the Ghetto as opposed to mixed race girls who worked at Burb Livin' speaks to the intersections and representations of class and race.

The other four girls that I interviewed: Naledi, Betty, Thula, and Fundi worked at Burb Livin' and they said that they felt safe and protected at work. On one of the days when I visited the site there was a white man who was harassing some of the girls and talking to them in a derogatory way, the bouncers kicked the man out. They were very big and tall men who looked very strong and had big muscles. One of the bouncers literally picked up the guy and threw him out of the club they did not ask him any questions nor talk to him about it. During my interview with Naledi she told me that there were no drugs allowed at the club and if they found you with drugs they kicked you out. They only allowed alcohol and cigarettes.

It also seemed like the women at Burb Livin' had more control over the sexual aspects of their work than Beauty did at her work. Beauty said that sometimes they had to fight with clients when they did not want to pay or when they want to make them do something that

they did not want, or sometimes the men would get too aggressive. On one of the evenings that I went to see Beauty she had an overnight client. They were going to this man's house. I was supposed to pick her up from the taxi rank the next morning when she arrived back in town (this man stayed somewhere in the west of Johannesburg). She said to me that she had a few regular clients that she trusted and that she did overnight visits with.

She charged R900 per night. The next morning at around 7am when I called Beauty she told me that her client did not want her to leave. He locked her in his house in the morning before he went to work. When I asked her if he asked her for permission and if she wanted to stay she said no, she wanted to leave but he wouldn't let her go.

Beauty: I am locked in this guys' house and he won't let me go, he said that he will take me back tomorrow.

Me: Where is he?

Beauty: He locked me in the house and went to work; he said he will be back early at like 12.

Me: where does he stay?

Beauty: Somewhere in the West I am not sure where I am exactly.

Me: So then do you charge him for another night? Is he going to pay you double?

Beauty: I don't know if he will pay me double but he refused to let me leave this morning. I will call you tomorrow when I get back to Johannesburg.

I could not get hold of Beauty for a few days after that conversation. When I did eventually get hold of her she told me that she had been busy and she was going to her mother in

Vosloorus to see her son and thereafter she was going to Lesotho and she was not sure when she would be back.

> *Beauty: I am going to Lesotho today something happened at home and I have to rush there, can't get into details we will talk when I get back.*

Please note that I asked Beauty countless times if there was anything I could do to help; if I could call someone for her or if she could give me the address and I could call the police. She insisted that she will be fine and she will deal with it. I then repeatedly asked her at least for the address of that man's house in-case she went missing and she did not want to give it to me. I asked her to send me her location on whatsapp (an instant messaging cell phone application) if she was not sure where she was exactly but she still refused.

From this day onwards Beauty did not respond to my messages nor answer my calls, although I did find out she was fine.[4] While I was not able to continue to research at The Ghetto, Beauty's experiences do provide a comparison for the women at Burb Livin'.

Beauty's story illustrated that violence is a real and significant part of sex work. However, not all sex work establishments are characterized by high levels of violence; seemingly, the lower the class of the establishment the worse the working conditions and the more prevalent the violence in the establishment. These women do not work in the most favourable working conditions however they stayed in sex work because of its earning potential given the lack of job opportunities available to them.

[4] She is well though as she still spoke to our mutual friend. When I asked our mutual friend what was going on, he said that Beauty is moody and will just do that to someone. He said that even he gets to talk to her during certain 'seasons when she felt like it'.

'Entering sex work'

The women in this study all entered the sex work industry because of economic strains; they did not have qualifications and they were unemployed for a significant period of time. Beauty was originally from Lesotho but her mother stayed in Vosloorus; Thula was from Zimbabwe; Naledi was from KZN; Betty and Sesi said they were from the East of Joburg (they did not want to tell me where in the East exactly). They all moved to Johannesburg city because of the promise of big city Johannesburg, known as the City of Gold. They thought that they had a better chance of finding employment in Johannesburg than anywhere else. They also communicated that it was the only thing that they could do given their situations.

Naledi used to work in various Grocery stores like Shoprite and Pick n' Pay before she became a sex worker.

> *"I moved back to Johannesburg to look for a job. I found a job as a cashier at Shoprite, I worked there and also Pick n Pay in the Butchers section. Until one day my finger got sliced by the meat slicer and I was out of a job. I looked for another job after that but I couldn't find one, even though I passed the interviews with flying colours, whenever they would see my cut finger I would not get the job."*

Naledi had come to Johannesburg when she was only 13 years old from rural KZN to look for her father. She had been kicked out of her home in KZN because she had a confrontation with her step mother and hit her. She did not know her father's name; all she knew was that he was 'a taxi driver in Joburg' (by stepmother she meant her uncle's wife (her mother's brother). She did not expect Joburg to be as big as it was. When she arrived, Johannesburg was not at

all like she expected. She lived on the streets for some time, and during this time she got raped on the street countless times. She was found and taken in by social workers, and they took her to school where she met a boy and got pregnant.

> *"When I was 13 moved I to Johannesburg to look for my father, I lived on the street for 3 months then social workers took me in. At 15 I went to school and got kicked out because I fell pregnant and then the social workers wanted me to abort the child but I refused. So then I took the child to my grandmother. I lived at home for a while, maybe like 3 years, then I came back to Jhb to look for a job, and I got consumed by the jozi lights."*

Johannesburg is referred to on the streets as the 'concrete jungle' because of its fast paced life. When she says she was consumed by the Jozi lights she was referring to the promise of 'freedom' that is associated with the opportunities of work and economic liberation associated with it.

Thula moved to Johannesburg from Zimbabwe because she was told by a friend how much money she could make in Johannesburg 'dancing'. She said that she had always liked dancing therefore she was excited about the job and the money. She moved to Johannesburg and stayed with a friend of hers who introduced her to her 'boss' who was the manager of Burb Livin'. She started dancing and she did not sell sex, but then because she realized how much extra money the other girls made, she started selling sex:

Do you like working here*? Well I don't know it's just work hey. But then at the same time in order to do this, the long hours, and cope you have to enjoy it, I have always enjoyed dancing.*

Do you feel like you're in danger when you work, given the nature of your work*? No, not at all, they protect you here.*

How does it feel when you are with a client upstairs? *I don't know hey, it doesn't really feel like anything. It's a client and I am at work. The first time is hard just like the first time you dance but then you eventually get used to it. I have been here for about three months now.*

These women moved to Johannesburg because it served as a symbol of hope as they viewed it as the only place that provided opportunities for them to improve their economic conditions. They entered and stayed in sex work because they felt like they earned more money doing sex work than they would earn in any other job because of their lack of education. They also liked the flexibility that their work provided them and 'appreciated' the fact that they had some sort of control over the amount of money they earned.

'Independence'

One of the things I was interested in unpacking was whether these women would stay in the industry if they were given other work opportunities. Most of the women said that they would not leave the industry because of the economic independence that sex work gave to them. I also asked them where they saw themselves in the future; this further reiterated that they valued the financial and work independence in that they did not want to work for someone else in an environment where they would receive the same 'little' wage no matter how hard they worked. This was the case for all my participants. They felt like sex work gave them

some control over how much money they made. The harder they worked the more money they made.

> *(**Thula on whether she would leave or not**) You know the thing is once you learn to stand on your own and you become independent it is very hard to work for someone else. Here you choose your own time, your own hours, and you have control over how much you make.*

Thula valued the independence that the money she made gave her. She also valued the independence that came with her being able to control her work hours and having a degree of control over how much money she made.

> ***(Thula on where she sees herself**) owning my own business back home.*

This echoed an entrepreneurial spirit and character. She did not want to leave and go work under somebody else.

> *(**Naledi on whether she would leave or not**) Like I said earlier, I have had times where I was just like Fuck this and I leave for a few days, weeks, or whatever. But then honestly I don't have any qualifications and I am too independent now, and the money is good. It would be hard to just leave because I don't think I would be able to go work for someone else for like R1000 a month again, that's nothing.*

Naledi seemingly stayed a sex worker because of the money that she would receive doing any other job. She had worked before in grocery stores therefore she did not want to go back to

earning such little money a month. She expressed that she earned more money than she ever had elsewhere doing sex work at Burb Livin'. She had done sex work on the street before working at the club. Naledi explained the fact that not having any qualifications was a barrier for her to get another job that would pay her a sufficient amount of money, as much money as she earns from selling sex`.

> *.. (**on where she sees herself in the future**) I am saving money on the side because I want to retire from this and leave in the next five years, invest my money, get shares or something".*

This also shows that Naledi did not want to work under someone else either. She saw herself doing something that allowed her to stay independent. Naledi did not want to tell me how old she was exactly however she was the oldest of my participants.

> ***(Betty on whether she would leave)** No hey, I like being on stage, I love and enjoy this job. I mean it was hard when I first started you know I was self conscious and so on but I got used to it, and now I enjoy it. The sex is for extra money you know I enjoy dancing and I don't think I will stop that but the fucking I will stop once I have enough money...*
>
> ***(On where she sees herself in future)** Don't worry one day you will come here and find me with my own girls, running my own thing."- Betty*

Betty's response shows that she had no prospects of leaving the sex work industry. She loved dancing on stage and she dreamt of staying in the industry but owning her own strip club. The

love for dance that Betty had was evident when she was dancing on stage. She was not as yet a Burb Livin' dancer but she mentioned that she worked every day at improving her dancing skills and fitness levels so she could become a resident dancer and get individual shows.

> ***(Beauty on whether she would leave)*** *yes I would if I find a job that paid me enough to live properly, not these stupid jobs that I have done that pay you very little money that you can't survive on. I mean I finished matric (Grade 12), and I have a receptionist certificate, I am trying to save money so I can go back to school. I want to leave this, I don't like it but it would be hard to leave the money. And I can be independent, work when I want and so on, eix I also don't know if I will manage at a 9-5.*
>
> ***(Beauty on where she sees herself in the future)*** *The thing also is that in this job you can't apply for a bond and many things because you don't have papers of employment. So I want to further my studies, I want to do engineering.*

Beauty valued her independence judging by her 'uncertainty' regarding whether or not she wanted a 9-5 job. She also stayed doing sex work because of its earning potential. However she yearned for the security that came with permanent employment. My friend who introduced me to Beauty worked as a recruitment consultant. He was aware of Beauty's qualifications and he showed me a conversation on Whatsapp that he had with her offering to find her a placement to work as a receptionist in a company.

She told him that she receives offers sometimes from her clients to work for them as a receptionist because they liked the way she looked, but she liked the flexibility of sex work and she made more money working at the hotel. This was also interesting because on the day that she was telling me about the fight, she mentioned that I must tell her if I know someone hiring for something she can do. It seems like she does want to leave but the economic constraints of the formal job market and the flexibility of sex work kept her in sex work. Therefore for Beauty what mattered more than anything was the money she received. Her aspiring to study further showed that she was aware of the opportunities that an education offered but she could not afford it.

Sex work therefore offered these women more money than they would receive doing other jobs. According to their views, their low earning potential was due to the fact that they had no qualifications. The money that they made varied. Beauty mentioned that she could make R500 and even R1000 sometimes on one day if she worked well but there were days when she would not find clients at all. Burb Livin paid their dancers R250 per day when they worked but they said they made a lot of money from tips and having sex with men. The tips also varied so they couldn't give me an estimate of how much tips they made exactly. The women at Burb Livin charged different prices per round but the prices for my participants varied between R150-R500. Not all of the workers felt like they were in danger when they were at work. It seemed like the Ghetto did not provide as much security as Burb Livin for the sex workers, but even so Beauty derived some sense of independence even working under the worse conditions at The Ghetto.

During my observations I saw also that there was a sense of community that existed between the girls at Burb Livin'. When someone was dancing and girls were on stage, the other girls

would go around the club approaching men and trying to get them to give the girls that were on stage a tip. This revealed a sense of helping each other to make more money. It seems like these women were hustling to survive just like the other members of society. Even though there is other work that is also exploitative and dangerous that is dominated by women, it is not as stigmatised and is seen as dignified work.

'Conclusion'

The dominant view in society and by the state that criminalises this job is that sex workers could find more dignified and 'cleaner' ways to survive. They are seen as making 'dirty money'. There has been increasing pressure on the state to decriminalise sex work, the ANC women's league last year spoke out in support of the decriminalisation of adult prostitution arguing that it will decrease the violence in the industry (News24 online, 21/10/2013; accessed 06/03/2014). However the state still insists on criminalising prostitution, which alludes to the fact that it still regards sex work as being immoral.

Viviena Zelizer (2009) argued that modern money is not homogenous and genderless but it is rather differentiated by quantities and special diverse qualities. She insisted that it is important to consider the social biography of money because it is not only characterised by its economic domains, 'market money', but there are also social and symbolic characteristics that are attached to it (Zelizer, 2009). She called this money, special money. She used a historical case study of domestic money to illustrate that "meanings, allocation, and quantity of money are partly determined by considerations of economic efficiency, but domestic money is equally shaped by changing cultural conceptions of money and of family life as well as by power relations, age, and gender" (Zelizer, 2009; 344). For instance, she argued that the wife's money is always treated differently and was never deemed as fundamental as the husband's

money no matter the quantity or how much it contributed to household expenses (Zelizer, 2009).

It is therefore important to consider the qualitative considerations of money considering the different social symbols attached to it. According to Zelizer (2009) special monies are and have historically been morally and ritually ranked. Money that is used for bride wealth is not seen as the same money used to buy food. These symbolic differences and boundaries were more visible during primitive times however cultural and social structures mark modern money by introducing controls that induce boundaries from sets of formal and informal values that regulate its uses/ allocation/ sources and quantity (Zelizer, 2009). In this light the use of money has created different cultural and moral dilemmas for society (Zelizer, 2009).

To apply Zelizer to our case study, then, another important aspect to consider is that class profoundly marks the character of money; sex work money which is mostly money of the poorer people in society earned through stigmatised work is deemed as dirty money. It is evident in South Africa, especially if one pays close attention to the media and discussions about sex workers on social networks, that they are seen as a group of women who are lazy to work hard and who take the lazy way out. The fact that their work is based on selling sex also marks their work as dirty and the money they make as not honourable. This relationship is more complex as the money that a sex worker makes is seen as bad money however its symbolism changes with its allocation as it means something different when it is used for leisure as opposed to the amount of the money that is used to take care of a child.

Sowetan Live published an online article earlier this year where they reported that Sisonke national lobbyist Nosipho Vidima said: “It's unfortunate that we are good enough for the ANC

politicians to make use of our services, but they are afraid to come out in support of decriminalisation of sex work, and the protection of our human rights," (Sowetanlive, 17/01/2014; accessed 05/03/2014). Her statement was in response to media reports that sex workers made a lot of money during the ANC's election manifesto weekend in Mbombela (Sowetanlive, 17/01/2014; accessed 05/03/2014). According to Sowetan Live, Mpumalanga police Spokesperson Colonel Leornard Hlathi said that the fact they made money during the ANC conference was not a matter they will comment on but what is important is that "they should not be proud of such activities because selling sex is a crime" (Sowetanlive, 17/01/2014; accessed 05/03/2014). Sisonke is a well known sex worker movement in South Africa. Ironically Burb Livin has a reputation on the street for being the place where a lot of politicians visit. The girls in the bathroom also told me that a lot of 'important people' like politicians go there and they pay a lot of money.

Overall (1992) echoed Karl Marx's perceptions as she argued that capitalism forges a situation where the majority of adult human beings must sell their labour power for some fraction of its value in order to obtain the means of subsistence for themselves and for those who are economically dependent upon them. The high rates of poverty in South Africa and around the world force a lot of people to do certain jobs for survivalist purposes Poverty combined with the historical prevalence of a system that denied women equal opportunities relative to men resulted in a situation where many job/ economic opportunities available for poor black women are often degrading. In this light Overall (1992) outlined that a lot of work that is done in society and that is not sex work is dangerous, coerced, takes away elements of human dignity and does not provide mutual pleasure in conducting the job nor job satisfaction. This work however does not have the same stigma attached to it as sex work does.

This illustrates that there is something additional that we are not keeping track of in our value hierarchies, that the stigma attached to sex work assumes that this work is more degrading than other forms of low wage, racist and other forms of gendered labour on offer to these women (see Kenny (2004) for working conditions in retail).

Economic constraints that force women to join the sex work industry as well as the negative and dangerous nature of the industry are real and undeniable. Not all sex workers work in dangerous situations but the very nature of their work exposes them to social, physical, mental, and health risks. We cannot in any way excuse or justify the negative parts of sex work or reduce it to a focus on women's autonomy, sexual 'liberation' or choice. Yet there is something very real about these women insisting on staying in the sex work industry and the ways in which they claim independence. In other words we are missing something by insisting on categorising the women's experiences into exploitation versus choice. We need to take seriously the more complicated realities that come out when we consider the political scope of human life and what is conceived as 'reality'. This understanding needs to be conceptualised from a framework that takes seriously the social nature of the body and that antagonises processes of embodiment which determine how humans perceive themselves and their identities.

CHAPTER 5-BODY WORK NEXUS

Looking at how sex workers perceive their gendered identities through a lens that takes embodiment seriously allows us a space to recognise that the relationship between the body and work is one that is complex and constantly negotiated. This chapter therefore aims to illustrate that the sex worker's body is a complex entity with complex embodied identities that mean different things to sex workers depending on what they do with the body at a given moment. It shows that the sex worker's body is malleable in that everything it experiences work wise, health wise and so on affects the way that sex workers embody their identities. This analysis will be based on Brent et al.,(2013)'s conceptualisation of the body work nexus which emphasises the multiple dimensions of the body during body work.

'Body/work nexus' is a phrase that Barbara Brent & Crystal Jackson (2013) coined to refer to interactive labour that requires the worker to engage directly with the client's body. In conceptualising the workings of this nexus they argued that the way that the worker perceives her/his body is itself culturally constructed in that it is influenced by the way that the larger society is organised (Brent et al., 2013). In other words; the way that society perceives the human body or a woman's body has resulted in the negative stigma that society has attached to and the devaluing of body work. This in turn has directly affected the way that sex workers perceive their own bodies and their gendered identities and social roles. This approach reflects on the complexity involved when trying to understand how the worker perceives her own body. They argued that there are multiple dimensions of body work/ sex work (Brent et al., 2013). These dimensions are physical labour, bodily labour, aesthetic labour, emotional labour, and interactive bodily labour(Brents et al., 2013).

'Physical labour'

Physical labour is labour performed by the worker where the body is the tool in that it refers to the physical acts that workers must perform using their own bodies (Brent et al., 2013). Physical labour is a big part of sex work therefore it is important to pay attention to the way that they performed the required physical activities of their work. For the women in this study, this referred to having sex and dancing.

Betty mentioned that the first time she danced on stage was hard as she did not know what she was doing exactly. She said that she did not have any sort of training beforehand, and therefore she learned by observing what the other ladies did. In the few weeks that I spent at Burb Livin', her dancing skills had improved significantly. She had a 'trademark' move that she performed every time she was on stage. She would shake her buttocks in a way that no other part of her body moved. When I first saw her do this, she was not very good at it but eventually she did it perfectly and in an extremely sexy way. It was a crowd favourite and she would do the move every time she was dancing for men in the club (on the stage and on the floor). When I asked her how she did it she said that she saw the other women do it and she used to practice in her room so she could perfect it because it was a sexy dance move that people liked and she felt really good when she did it. She tried to show me how to do it but I couldn't get it right then she said "*you see it might look easy but it is difficult so you need to go home and practice*".

This is in accordance with Brent et al (2013) argument that a big part of learning this job was learning and perfecting the physical techniques in a way that set the worker apart from the rest. Betty's goal was to eventually be able to dance like and become a Burb Livin' dancer.

She was dancing a lot also to improve her fitness levels so she could start dancing on the poles.

Thula said that her first time having sex was hard and at that time she had only had sex with the father of her child back at home. This guy was also her first love; he broke her virginity and they were supposed to get married however it did not work out. She emphasised that the more she had sex with clients, the more she got used to it and then it just felt 'normal' to have sex with a client. In this light, repeatedly performing the same exercise made it easier for her to deal with the sex aspect of her job. One could argue that she perhaps alienated herself from any 'meaningful' emotional attachment that she had to sex. Thula expressed that she was a Christian and she had been saving her virginity before she fell in love with the father of her son. She eventually learned to distance 'herself' from the sexual act thus seemingly becoming desensitised from the sexual act in that she only attached monetary value to it.

The physical intensity of the sexual act depended on the money that the client paid. Betty said that the more the client paid the more 'active' she was in bed.

> ***Me: What's the time limit you give your clients?***
>
> ***Betty:*** *It depends on how much money they have, you know, if your heavy then hey. If you're not heavy then I become a chicken, one two I'm done.*

To become a "chicken" is a metaphor that means that she becomes like a dead chicken that is cut open in that she just lies still on the bed with her legs open and not doing anything to increase the pleasure the man gets. On the other hand, if the man has more money she

becomes more active in bed and touches the man, strokes him in different places, and basically does things to ensure that he has a very good session. They also charged more money for all nighters and this amount also depended on what the men wanted exactly. Betty said that she charged more if the man wanted anal and she also charged more for doggy style. Thula said that she did not do anal at all as she found it too painful.

The female body and bodily experiences also presents boundaries to their work as it naturally presents physical limitations to this type of work, i.e. when a worker has her menstrual cycle or also as Thula says that anal sex is painful for her. However these women have ways that they deal with this. They cannot afford not to work because that means they do not make money, especially considering that we can have our menstrual periods for more than a week. When Beauty told me that she had been bleeding for more than a week I asked her if her clients did not mind having sex with her while she was on her periods. She said that she did not get her period initially when she started the injection however there are various ways that they dealt with it.

She said that she inserted a soft sponge inside her vagina; this sponge absorbs all the blood. After she has sex with a client she takes the sponge out and puts in another one. When I asked her what kind of sponge it was she said a '*normal small'* sponge. Sex workers therefore find various solutions to deal with the 'natural' limitations presented by the feminine body experiences.

I asked her how she found out about this technique, she said that she heard 'amahemhem' (word on the streets) and her first roommate when she first started selling helped her out and showed her how to do a lot of things. She said this woman taught her tricks like how to open her legs in a way that gave her the ability to control how deep the man's penis can go in. On

one of the days that I went to the 'gym' for the pole dancing lessons, Phoenix did not pitch up. Phoenix was the Burb Livin' dancer that conducted the pole dancing lessons. When we walked in there was a woman who was showing another woman how to bend her back during doggy style. According to her, there is a specific way that a woman must arch her back in order to open up wider thus making the penis go in easier and vice versa. When we walked in we also showed interest and she showed us as well and demonstrated other sexual position that made men climax quicker.

This session ended up being a 'fun' session where we were all just fooling around. These other women were showing me how to get up the pole easier as I was struggling. They expressed that it was very difficult for them also at first and it took a lot of falling and bruises however it becomes easier and worthwhile. Once you perfect the art of pole dancing you stood a higher chance of becoming a Burb Livin' resident dancer and earning more money.

According to my observations, girls who could work the pole received more tips and recognition both on and off stage than those who could not.

It is important to examine the physical aspect of their labour because it illustrates the boundaries and limitations present in body work by virtue of the body being the main tool that is used to work. Exploring processes of embodiment also reveals the need to analyse how these women position themselves in relation to the experiences of their bodies.

'Bodily labour'

Bodily labour refers to the way that the worker has to physically feel and manage another person's body in order to invoke a certain emotion (Brent et al., 2013). Naledi mentioned that every client is different because when you get a client you have to observe and learn what the

client wants. She said that when you get a client for the first time, especially one who pays well you have to watch his response in order to learn "*what makes him tick*". In the beginning you have to pay attention to his bodily reaction to different places that you touch. This helped her determine which areas she should focus on. She said that this was important because all men like different things; for example you cannot assume that all men like blow jobs. There are some men who hate blow jobs and some men who don't want to have penetrative sex and just want a blow job or a hand job. She said some men liked it rough, and when you say nasty things while others wanted it slow and 'sexy'.

It was also interesting to observe the way that these women approached clients. Some of the women used a subtle approach while others were aggressive. There was a time that I went to Burb Livin' with a male friend of mine. We were sitting next to the stage on the ottomans on that night but hardly any of the girls approached him because they thought I was his girl friend. As we were about to leave the club I went to the ladies room and as I was coming out there was a girl that was trying to convince him to go upstairs with her. This girl grabbed onto and started rubbing on his penis to get him aroused and convince him to go upstairs with her.

The same thing happened at The Ghetto where one of the women was stroking a male friend of mine's penis to get him horny. The woman at the Ghetto however did not wait for me to leave his side; she did it while I was standing right next to him, while she was talking to the both of us. This showed that the approach at the Ghetto was a little bit raunchier and more aggressive that the approach of the women at Burb Livin'. Beauty, Sesi, and Betty complained that sometimes the men took too long to climax. Beauty said to me that she

works on a clock and she needs to hurry up the client so that she gets to the next one unless he pays more. She said:

> *"I tell him that hai, now your time is almost up you need to finish now... if he does not finish it's his problem not mine, when his time is up its up."*

When I asked Beauty how much sex time she gave each client she said:

> "*two minutes, five minutes maximum... but five minutes is a long time for fifty rands? Fifty rands is not a lot of money so you must get in and get out."*

It seemed like the amount of money that the men paid determined the quality of service that they received.

Exploring bodily labour reveals the significance of noting the way that it reacts to sensations of touch. The body is not and cannot be viewed as an object that is simply present during the labour process. When these women work and have sex with clients, the physical body and physical feelings of the body are present. Their work requires them to be aware of this physicality as well as the way that other people perceive their body. In other words they always have to present their bodies in a way that is sexually appealing to to their clients.

'Aesthetic labour'

Aesthetic labour is labour performed on one's own body to portray a particular image or style that is part of the job (Brent et al., 2013). Aesthetic labour refers to work that the workers perform on themselves in order to meet other women or men's expectations of their physical attractiveness or beauty (Brent et al., 2013). Most of the women at Burb Livin had 'good' looking hairand had make-up on. Good hair refers to hair extensions that look like they could be their real hair as well as those that move 'swiftly' and in a way that 'natural' human hair moves. They all had different types of hair extensions on; none of the women that I saw at the club had their natural hair, except for the coloured and asian girls. Every time I went to the toilet there were women fixing their hair and make-up. It was evident that aesthetic appeal was an important aspect of their jobs. This was apparent given the amount of money some of them spent on looking 'beautiful'. There also seemed to be a standard of Beauty amongst the girls in the club. This fitted with popular culture's notions of what being beautiful is; it is looking like Beyonce and other celebrities.

Shoes were also seemingly important for the girls. Most of them wore beautiful stilettos of different kinds. The Burb Livin girls wore red bottoms during their dance performances which was a very important marker of class. Original red bottoms are Louboutins which is a very expensive shoe label. I asked one of the women there if the shoes that the dancers were wearing were authentic 'Loubs'. She said she didn't know but she wouldn't be surprised if they were because those ladies made a lot of money and splurged a lot on clothes and stuff, especially shoes.

During one of my visits there were two girls who were sitting next to me, on that day I was also sitting next to the stage observing the dancers and the reactions of the men around the

stage. These ladies were making fun of one of the women who was wearing 'ugly' shoes; she was wearing pink wedge like shoes. In the same breath they were admiring one of the 'red bottom' shoes that one of the Burb Livin girls was wearing in the previous act. Fashion labels were also seemingly important to these women because every-time I attended the gym classes these women were wearing fashion labels. The most popular was seemingly Nike and Puma. Naledi's story also echoed the presence of a certain standard and image of beauty.

Naledi expressed that:

> *"the other girls always try to bully me because I am so tall and a lot of them think I am ugly. But you know I do not take such things seriously, Im a crazy person so I just let them be."*

The day that I saw her for the first time was in the ladies toilet. I went in there and she was sad and telling another girl that she did not feel pretty and that she felt very ugly on that day. This girl seemed to be putting her down under the guise of comforting her. Naledi was tall and skinny, she had small crooked teeth and some of her teeth had brown marks. She also had a few scars on her face. Her skin also did not look very healthy and she had no 'booty'. The other girl had a Brazilian weave on and her make-up was done properly. She was about 1.6 metres tall, had a long curly weave, and a firm round buttocks. Her skin looked free of pimples and she fitted the apparent criteria of being 'beautiful'. She was telling Naledi to stop putting herself down by describing how beautiful she was; she called herself Pocahontas. So the conversation was actually not concerned with Naledi it was more about her emphasising how beautiful she was and how everyone knows it which is why all the men wanted her badly.

It came out throughout my interview with Naledi that it really upset her that some girls did not think that she was beautiful. However by her saying that it did not bother her suggests that she attempted to dismiss it and hide how much it upset her. She said '*I am a crazy person'* as a way to divert the focus away from the fact that she seemed upset. It was evident in the tone of her voice that it really bothered her and her trying to hide it alluded that she was trying to portray an image of herself as being this strong woman who was not affected and did not care what other people thought about her, which was not the case. This elucidated how much aesthetic appeal and meeting these expected standards of beauty mattered to the ladies. Naledi was trying to physically appear strong and that she was not bothered. In other words she was trying to hide her true emotions by acting otherwise.

Aesthetic labour is a significant aspect of sex work because they have to present a certain image that symbolises 'beauty' and feeds into the sexual fantasies of the men in the club. It was also seemingly a marker of status and there was competition between the girls regarding levels of beauty. Naledi's reaction begins to illustrate the fact that their job does not only involve their bodies but their work and experiences ignite and require emotional responses and effects.

'Emotional labour '

Emotional labour occurs on three levels: attending the physical sensations of the customer; attending the emotional needs of the customer by producing an emotional result in the customer; and managing and modifying one's own emotions on the job and as a result of the work (Brents et al., 2013; 81). Analysing the emotional aspects of their labour is very complex as emotional labour includes all the dimensions of body labour. Hochschild (2003) argued that analysing the outcome of service work is complex because it does not produce a

tangible outcome but is rather measured by the 'emotional' satisfaction of the customer. In these types of jobs "the emotional style of offering the service forms part of the service itself" (Hochschild, 2003; 5). In this regard a worker always needs to appear as if she loves what she is doing which necessitates her eventually trying and learning to love her job because this increases customer satisfaction (Hochschild, 2003). This brings into play necessary strategies that help these workers deal with the expectations of their work.

Beauty during one of our conversations expressed that the most difficult part of her job was that she was alone and could not really be herself in that she couldn't express her true feelings to the people she was with most of the time. She said that she had no friends in the hotel and she did not want to make friends because that always resulted in some kind of fight. She only had women who she spoke to when she was in the bar. She said that she always has to seem like she was in a good mood and always had to be sexy for another person which was tiring for her.

For her, being a sex worker was lonely because she felt like no one cared how she felt; she always had to service other people and appear a certain way no matter how she was feeling on that particular day. According to Beauty the ladies at The Ghetto were hard core so then she always had to put on a tough persona:

> *"You know this job changes you and your heart becomes really hard. You become cruel and heartless sometimes because that is what you have to do to survive here." =*

Betty also expressed that as a sex worker she had to master the art of faking her emotions. She said that she always faked her enjoyment of sex and her climaxing when she was with a client but when she was having sex with her boyfriend she did not have to fake it all the time. She did say she faked it with him sometimes as well. Naledi emphasised that not all men are bad and that some of her regular clients call her when they want someone to talk to. For Naledi the job was not all about sex all the time. She said that it made her happy when a client left her room with a smile on her face because it meant that she was able for a little time to help the customer "*forget his troubles*".

Betty and Thula attached joy to their being on stage dancing. It is when they were on stage that they felt like they were very sexy, desired, and wanted. This illustrated the relevance of visibility and the women wanting to be and finding value in being seen and wanted. They felt like they were their true selves when they were on stage because they enjoyed dancing. This is when they could allow themselves to reveal what they were really feeling at that time while they were at work. This alludes to the idea that they may be finding self worth through the way that men desire to touch and have them when they are dancing on stage. They seemed to find some sort of solace from performing on stage in front of all the men that are focusing solely on them and desiring to have sex with them at that moment when they couldt have them.

Me: So Betty do you enjoy this? How do you feel when you are on stage*?*

Me*: All eyes on me baby, I feel sooo good.*

Me*: Thula how does it feel when you are dancing on stage in front of all these people?*

***Thula**: At first it was hard but after a few times on stage you start to feel comfortable and enjoy it. I like being on stage it makes me feel sexy and like I can do anything that I want to do. I feel on top of the world and in control when people are looking at me and wanting me.*

There are various ways in which sex workers deal with the battle of retaining their 'true selves' in all that they do and embodying a certain persona when they are at work. In other words we need to consider how they reconcile the personal and the impersonal in understanding their emotional management strategies in the work place.

Another important emotional performance for sex workers occurred during the Burb Livin dancers performances. As mentioned in the first chapter, one of the props that the Burb Livin dancers had to use was dildos. When they were dancing and inserting their dildos into their vaginas, their facial expressions had to present feelings of excitement and sexual pleasure. No matter if it was uncomfortable or how she felt at that moment she could not express them. When observing the group dancers, some of them seemed very uncomfortable being on stage while others seemed comfortable and like they were enjoying themselves. There were girls who seemed a bit shy on stage not so much shy about being on stage but rather their clothes coming off and being exposed.

Most of these women appeared to be under the influence of something. I don't know whether it was drugs or just alcohol. However it was evident that they consumed a lot of alcohol. They could be consuming drugs to numb out their feelings when they are at work. Naledi told me that there were no drugs allowed at the club, however there was a small trace of white pills in the corner of the stairwell that led up to the ladies bathroom (I do not know what those pills

were but we can only assume). On another occasion when I was with another male friend of mine, he expressed that one of the girls was trying to convince him to go upstairs. He said she told him that they could go upstairs and have a party for two because she could get him anything he wanted; she offered him Tik and Cocaine. Judging by the massive amount of alcohol that some of the women in this study consumed, it would be a relevant assumption to note the possibility that they consumed 'behaviour altering toxins' to numb out their emotions because they cannot allow themselves to genuinely 'feel' much when they were at work.

Betty and Sesi during our interview said that a lot of men always bought them drinks because they were very quiet and moody when they were not drunk as opposed to being highly energetic and entertaining when they were under the influence. It seemed somewhat customary for the men to buy the women drinks because they were seen taking shots with them and always going to the bar with them. They said that they did not talk to anyone and were not approachable when they were sober.

Me: but I come here very often and you always seem to be happy, especially you Betty. (Everyone laughs)

Betty: hao that means you always get here when I am nice.

Me: But its early still and you seem sober and you are jolly? (*Betty and Sesi laugh)*

Betty: hahaha, we haven't really slept and we have been drinking since around 7.

It was fairly early, a little after 11 o'clock, when we had this conversation because I had just left the gym class and they were already in the bar area drinking alcohol.

Sex work requires a constant negotiation and manipulation of the feelings of all parties involved. These women constantly had to manage their emotional responses in a way that 'hid' their true feelings and presented emotions that 'pleased' their clients. This resulted in some of them finding various ways and strategies to 'separate' their bodies from their feelings. However, the experiences of these women illustrate that the different dimensions of the body are never mutually exclusive in that all aspects of the body and the person are present at all times because of the interactive demand of their labour.

'Interactive labour'

An important element of sex work that sets it apart from other work is the interactive nature of the exchange. Interactive bodily labour is where the "customer touches back/ customer is allowed or encouraged to engage the worker's body" (Brents et al., 2013; 81). It was important for the dancers at Burb Livin' to be aware of the reactions from the audience. When these women danced they looked around to see who was tipping the most and who seemed the most 'intrigued'. They studied the crowd when they were on and off the stage and they also gave each other advice about which man tipped the most.

The dancers at Burb Livin' were 'protected' and they could only be touched when they were on stage if they allowed or encouraged it. It seemed like the raunchier their acts were the more the crowd was pleased. This necessitated interaction with men while they were dancing because this seemed to appease the crowd. When these women were dancing on stage and they spotted a man who was tipping a lot they would dance next to him and make him touch their bodies. During one of my visits, one of the men grabbed onto one of the dancers ass and

started licking her vagina. The bouncers were standing by waiting for a signal from the girl for them to take the guy away but she simply arched her back and wiggled her buttocks.
The man grabbed onto this girl, licked her vagina and immersed his face into her buttocks and then afterwards, she opened her legs for him and he put a R100 note in her vagina. This act of putting a R100 note in and on the vagina occurred frequently.

Most of the time, almost every performance, the girls would get the men around the stage to spank them. They demanded to be spanked very hard because if the man spanked them a little they would encourage him to spank again harder. The interaction was also evident in the special performances that they offered. There was a night where one of the men was there for his bachelor party, and he was pretty drunk. His friends encouraged him to get on the stage for a lap dance from the Burb girls. The three girls gave him a lap dance and took off his clothes, they let this man touch them and rubbed his hands on their breast and their bodies. When this man was stripped down to his boxers it was evident that he had a very small penis. His penis was very small, probably the size of an average pinky finger when it was erect.

The women took off his boxers and started interacting with his penis in a way that ridiculed it. They did things like blowing air onto it and measuring it with their pinky fingers. The more the crowd chanted, the more they made fun of this guy, at that moment they had tied his hands to the back of the chair with his tie. This showed that it was important for the workers to interact with the individual man as well as the crowd. The interaction while the women were on stage always had to occur in a way that pleased the crowd.

According to my understanding interactive labour includes all dimensions of their bodies because they have to interact with the clients and the crowd at the strip club emotionally,

mentally and physically. This involved them being mentally aware of their surroundings, being able to connect 'emotionally' with their clients and the guests at the club, as well as performing physically to meet the requirements of their work. Their perceptions of their interactions with their clients was influenced and shaped by their experiences while they were working.

Their work required extensive engagement between their bodies and the bodies of their clients. This illustrates the complexity of boundaries in their work in that the nature of the demands presented by the necessary interaction limited the control that they had over their bodies. The 'enchanting myth of customer sovereignty' dictated the nature of the bodily interactions in that most of the time the women had to perform roles that put them in 'subservient' positions to men. These women therefore had to be affectively present when they were working and the ways that they embodiment their work experiences was also influenced by the workings and organisations of life in the wider society.

'Bodies and pleasure'

Sex work has been regarded as an act of rebellion against gendered norms that are dominant in society. However these examples illustrate that within the 'rebellion' there are also signs of conformity which expresses the power of culture and influences on the discursive body.

I asked Naledi:

> ***Me: How do you differentiate between sex at work and sex with a partner?***
>
> *Naledi: I don't differentiate between paid sex and unpaid sex, sex is sex and I enjoy it.*

Me: So you kiss your clients and are intimate with them? Would you say that you 'make love' while at work*?*

Naledi: Yes I make love to my clients and I do kiss the client if they want. Every time I have sex it's like the first time so it's the same if I was with my boyfriend, you see I made the choice to get into this work so I might as well enjoy it.

The way that Naledi said that "*every time I have sex is like the first time*" echoes religious notions of women's innocence and attempts to retain the meanings that it attaches to sex. She seemingly somehow is reconstituting a virginal fantasy which is interesting and surreal considering how much sex she has on a daily basis. This infers the extent to which dominant norms are instilled in society. Could she be saying this or choosing to perceive her work in this way as a means of her to justify to herself that it is ok for her to have sex with all those men? She said that she gets sexual pleasure as well when she sleeps with a man.

However as mentioned earlier she had emphasised that she needs to keep the client happy so the client comes back. This revealed uncertainty regarding what exactly she enjoyed about the sex. As much as she said it was about the sexual pleasure on the body, it is interesting to note that she linked her enjoying it directly to the client coming back.

Naledi was raised by her Grandmother who was a church going woman. Her grandmother was the only adult figure who had been present throughout her life. During our interview she said that she was a grandmother's daughter and that nobody must mess with her grandmother. She said that her grandmother raised them to be respectful, God fearing women. Even though she made different life choices she said that she still prayed and knew that "*He is always looking*

out for me". During one of our random conversations during one of my site visits she said that she had been through so much 'shit' in her life that she was alive because of the grace of God. We were actually having a random conversation about her day, she seemed a little sombre on that day but when I asked her if everything was ok she insisted she was fine. I remember she actually got pretty drunk that day.

This shows that Naledi referring to her first experience in a way that alluded to this moral virginal fantasy could have also been influenced by the beliefs of the most influential adult figure in her life. The Christian religion emphasises that a woman is more valuable when she is a virgin.[5]

The follow up question was:

> ***Me: Do you have any sort of selection criteria for men that you go for?***
>
> *Naledi: I prefer white men, most of my clients are white. I mean I do do black men sometimes but I prefer white men. Black men just come and they ride you and they fuck you for their money's worth. They just want to fuck and fuck and forget that I am a human being too. Not all of them, some of them are nice, I just like white men and they seem to like me too (laughs).*

Her saying *"they just want to fuck and fuck and forget that I am a human being too"* contradicts her statement that she enjoys it every time she has sex with a client. This shows

[5] This is evident in a few bible verses like Leviticus 21:13-14 and Isiah 62:5.

that conceptualising sexual pleasure and pleasure in sex work is more complex than it seems at face value. So this begs the question; was she really referring to sexual pleasure in terms of having an orgasm and getting sexual relief or was she talking about her enjoying it in terms of the fact that it is attached to money? It therefore seems that there was something that she was trying to avoid talking about or trying to avoid dealing with that she endured when she had sex with a client. When I asked her about selection criteria she responded with race. The father of her children was a white man and she said that white men have always liked her and she liked white men. So she seemingly went for the type of men that she was or had previously been sexually attracted to.

Beauty on the other hand expressed that she did not like having sex with so many men. She said that some of the men did not care about her feelings and just wanted to 'fuck' because they paid. She said there were many times when her vagina would be sore and she couldn't work because she was still '*small down there even after pregnancy'*. She said she was naturally an affectionate person so she wanted to have a man that loved her and that made love to her.

> *"But then I have those clients that are nice and caring. I guess I comfort myself with them because they treat me well and I also take care of them... I also have this one client who just knows what he is doing. He is very sweet and I get excited when he calls me because he pays well and I know I will enjoy myself."*

Betty and Naledi employed different ways to find elements of 'pleasure' in their work. However they both spoke about pleasure in a way that linked it to the money that they received; simultaneously emphasising sexual relief and enjoyment. This reveals that the

relationship between or the conceptualisation of their bodies and pleasure is very complex, which further illustrates the malleable and subjective nature of the body and the way in which it is experienced.

'Conclusion'

The women in this study understood and perceived the physical labour that they performed with their bodies in different ways. The depth of body work research lies in understanding how the subject perceives and understands her own body and positioning in society. The body is thus a discourse that represents and caries different identities and symbolises various facets of the self. Sex workers are not objects of the institution of prostitution. Looking at sex workers through a lens that takes the complexity of embodiment seriously illustrates that looking at it from a two part relation framed on exploitation versus agency is limited.

The different dimensions of body work are at play at any given moment which illustrates that the body is a subjective tool that affects and is affected by all activities and perceptions of society. In this light it cannot be treated as an object that is simply used as a tool by sex workers during sexual intercourse. The body itself also presents certain limitations to body work and is directly influenced by various experiences of the worker. The worker occupies all the spaces and roles in their lives affectively. This complexity that characterises body/sex work is what Brent et al.(2013) conceptualised as body work nexus as it considers material relations that construct the mindfulness of the body. Looking at sex work from this view is what brings social analysts closer to the 'reality' of the bodily experiences of sex workers.

We need to consider the larger discourse of power relations that is at play and that works to appropriate changes in society in order for the dominant social order to prevail because it

directly influences the way that we perceive our existence. The more complex and open concept of body work enables us to see that these women take a sense of control, self-esteem, and pleasure from their work at the same time that they are also dealing with the conflict and contradictions within it

In understanding how these sex workers embody their gendered identity we need to analyse and conceptualise how they perceive their relationships with other people in their lives. The women in this study valued their roles as mothers more than anything else in their lives; to an extent that it seemed like some of them became sex workers because they had children. The following chapter therefore aims reveal how these women understood their roles as mothers relative to the stigmatised work that they did.

CHAPTER 6: PRESSURES OF THE MOTHER ICON

The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader a look into how these women understood womanhood, 'human-hood', and their roles as mothers. I am in no way trying to illustrate what a 'good mother' should be nor am I arguing with or against any depiction of a mother that will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter aims to illustrate the way that these women perceived and treasured their roles as mothers, within a framework that takes seriously the politics attached to the role and the notion of motherhood in society. This necessitates the consideration that motherhood has historically been central to the identity of women in South Africa to an extent of it being connected with invested forms of nationalism which only validated women in their roles as strong mothers (McClintock, 1993; Lewis, 1999; Hassim, 1993). The political concept of 'motherhood' thus brings out the complexity involved in observing the way that these women use their mother statuses.

The South African notion of motherhood has historically been grounded in a domestic ideology produced by Evangelism in response to industrialisation (Gaitskel, 1983). This religious conception of a virtuous woman was originally followed by the white middle class however it eventually spread across the different races and classes (Gaitskel, 1983). This Evangelic Christian culture positioned women as the guard of its values which transcended into a society that politically, economically, and socially always subsumed a woman to the domestic role of a housewife (Gaitskel, 1983). The dominance of Christian values protected and constructed a woman as a loyal being who valued her chastity, maintained her purity

(sexually), and was submissive to her husband. A woman became an object that was allowed a degree of subjectivity and that was valued only because of her maternal capacities and in her role as a mother (Gaitskel, 1983).

In this light the woman simultaneously at any given time played three roles; that of a woman, a mother, and a wife (Gaitskel, 1983). In the Christian doctrine, a wise mother is one who is selfless and always puts the needs of her children and other people in society before her own. The construction and justification of women's 'natural' domestic roles in South Africa was a political and contradictory process that occurred in economic, social, public and private spheres of life. This becomes evident when we analyse the way that the importance of motherhood was constructed in South African history.

Anne McClintock (1993) argued that women have been instrumentally positioned in inferior positions to men dating back to when South Africa started recognising the concept of nationhood and national identity. The construction of nationhood was a significantly gendered process that was characterised by power relations and efforts to reinforce male domination over females (McCLintok, 1993). Nationalism, according to McClintok (1993), is a process that functions to institutionally embed social differences by creating a sense of identity through shared experience. In this light men became recognised as being close to each other while women appeared only in symbolic roles: "women are typically construed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency" (McClintok, 1993; 63). The identity of the nation in South Africa was constructed based on the notion of familyhood because of the 'natural' division of gender and household labour in that space which awarded subjective power to the men in the family (McCLintok, 1993). This moved the power relations that characterised the 'private' domestic space into the wider

public realm which gave legitimacy to the subordination of women and awarded men complete autonomy and power over the processes of national modernity (McCLintok, 1993). The 'domestification' and objectification of women in public and private spaces is evident in the way that women are recognised for any significant contribution that they made in the fight for national liberation; for example Winnie Mandela being honoured as the 'woman of the nation'. (McCLintok, 1993).

It is very important that we recognise the differences in the struggles faced by South African women as the diversity of experiences illustrates that we cannot universalise 'womanhood' or 'motherhood' (McCLintok, 1993). South Africa stems from a history of Apartheid which was a period of white domination over the black race. Black people were institutionally excluded economically, politically, and socially; which is the main reason why the black population remains the poorest in South Africa. In other words the black race is still suffering from the legacy of apartheid. Black women never had the 'luxury' of being housewives like the white middle class white women did; black women always had to work to contribute to the family's income (Mclintok, 1993). Black and white women therefore experienced and bore the brunt of gender oppression in different ways as black women had to simultaneously deal with economic, political, and social exclusion.

Although black women played an active role in the fight against apartheid, their contributions and efforts were sometimes reduced to domestic roles. The African National Congress (ANC) is regarded as the liberation party in South Africa as its efforts led to the end of apartheid and it was the first political party to lead the 'democratic' South Africa. Historically when the ANC started including women as 'citizens' in their party, they included them only to shelter men and entertain them in 'service to their nation' (McClintok, 1993). The role that was

‘assigned’ to them was to cook for the men and take care of them so they would be ‘fit’ for the political sphere.

The Inkatha Freedom Party of Kwazulu Natal formed based on the notion of Zulu nationhood. They formed the Inkatha Women’s Brigade of 1997 under the guise of effective strategies and actions to promote the involvement and inclusion of women in development (Hassim, 1993). However the fact that they formulated their strategies based on traditional notions of Zulu-ism illustrated that they were also instrumentally reinforcing the sub-ordinate domestic role of the woman (Hassim, 1993). They positioned the woman as the bearer of tradition for the sake of ‘genuine’ continuity after they disbanded from the ANC. The symbolic nature and character of a Zulu woman embodied the role of ‘mother of the nation’ as she was characterised as being a ‘revolutionary’ symbol of history that had “patience, strength, suffering, endurance, and loyalty” (Hassim, 1993; 11). This Zulu nationalism was promoted by adopting a romanticised version of the history of the shared struggles of the Zulu nation using the images of Zulu warriors such as Shaka-zulu (Hassim, 1993).

White women were also oppressed in various ways however they are also oppressors in that they were actively involved in processes of promoting white domination (McClintok, 1993). The women’s monument was erected in 1913 to honour Afrikaans women who died in the camps during the war. This image illustrated white women standing and weeping with their children which symbolically focused attention on the sorrow of a mother as opposed to the military defeat of Afrikaans men (McClintok, 1993). This also took attention away from the fact that white women were active agents in the oppression of black people; white women took advantage of this and attempted to formulate a false sense of sisterhood which black women remain wary of McClintok, 19993).

Desiree Lewis (1999; 38) argued that "discriminatory patterns are reproduced through popular mythology" therefore we cannot look to legislation for explanations of inequality and differential treatments in society. Women were historically and traditionally granted citizenship only in their roles as mothers which positioned them in a space where they were always inferior to men which begins to explain why the 'pressures of the mother icon' prevail (Lewis, 1999; 39). In this regard a mother becomes, is, and has always been constructed as a 'mythical norm' which every woman must work to embody. Lorde (1992) defined the mythical norm as a person who is perfect and ideal and who everyone strives to become.

Lewis (1999) used two autobiographies by two South African women, Mamphele Ramphele and Ellen Kuzwayo, to illustrate that the 'mother' has come to have little to do with experiences but has rather become a romanticised figure that has been constructed as a validating label through which women acquire esteem. More accurate experiences that show the pain and the imperfections that characterise the reality of becoming a mother, like the invasiveness of pregnancy (labour pains, post-natal trauma, and difficulties of raising children), are covered with mystified notions that separate reproductive capacities from actual experiences (Lewis, 1999). She argued that stories of motherhood are communicated by elevating women only through their mother status by validating them as strong mothers but denying them any significant power outside the domestic space which was always the case during the nation struggle (Lewis, 1999).

Douglas and Michaels (2004) spoke about the 'new momism' in New York to refer to the idealistic role of the mother that is constructed by contemporary media, books, and magazines that romanticise the role of being a mother as the most gratifying role that one can play. The media subjects women to this constant imagery of romanticised depictions of this

demanding yet perfect mother who must also work to ensure that she performs for and pleases her husband in the bedroom through the guise of 'celebrating motherhood'(Douglas et al. 2004). The 'new momism' therefore refers to the "insistence that no woman is truly complete or fulfilled unless she has kids, that women remain the best primary caretakers of children, and to be a remotely good mother, a woman has to devote her entirely physical, psychological, intellectual and emotional being 24/7 to her children" (Douglas et al., 2004; 4).

This celebration of womanhood convinces women that they are active agents who have many choices as they are in control of their own destiny; however the only truly enlightened choice to make is to become a mother (Douglas et al., 2004). This institutionalisation of the 'new momism' is also present in the media and other social institutions prevalent in South Africa. Gaitskel (1983) argued that religion was a European institution that was constructed in the 1900s to protect and justify patriarchal values in that it served as a disciplinary mechanism that pushed young black African women to criticise themselves for doing what they wanted.

Black domestic workers were brought into this ideology that valued a woman only in a certain way that essentialised her role as a mother by training her to be a domestic worker thus positioning her as a worker for a white woman (Gaitskel, 1983). This European value system was strategically enforced in South Africa to symbolically position African women as the guards of these values as a way to make them police themselves to prevent and confine rebelliousness from the patriarchal norm (Gaitskel, 1983). The way that the women in my study perceived their 'mother' roles fitted within the discourse of motherhood in South African notions of womanhood and femininity which are fundamentally based on these Evangelic principles.

This extensive summary of the history of the construction of the motherhood identity in South Africa is necessary in order to contextualise these women's experiences and illustrate the significant prevalence of the 'traditional' identity of the mother. It is imperative for us to take the conceptualisation of motherhood and maternal love from this view that considers the history of the mother identity in South Africa because this image of the traditional mother echoed throughout these women's perceptions and stories about their roles as mothers. The stories that the women in my study told me illustrated how much they valued their mother statuses. It would have been hard to miss the pride that filled their voices and demeanours when they spoke about their children and being mothers. It was evident to me that these women profoundly valued their roles as mothers and it almost seemed like their roles as mothers preceded any other aspect of their lives

'Identifying as Mothers'.

The love that the women in my study had for their children illuminated through the tone, body language, and the way they spoke about their roles as mothers and their views about womanhood. It seemed as if being a mother was one of the reasons that some of the mothers in this study became and remained sex workers. It was a high priority for them to make enough money to provide for their children and give them opportunities to be successful and make different life choices. Coincidentally all the women, except for one, that I interviewed and interacted directly with for purposes of this research were mothers. The only one that was not a mother desired to conceive a child sometime in her future because she admired the joy that her sister's son brought to her sister.

Fundile, who was one of the women I had a conversation about my research with in the bathroom had a C-section scar and she told me that she always wore outfits that allowed her to show her scar because it was a big part of who she was.

Fundile: *…can you believe that I look like this and I had a child by C—section, scars and all I still go out there and look sexy and dance and flaunt my scars because it is part of who I am.*

***Me**: But like don't you feel self-conscious?*

***Fundile**: noo it's about confidence baby, you just need to be confident and have sex appeal.*

These women spoke confidently and freely about their 'mother' status. This related to them embracing and seeing their maternal capacities as a big part of who they were which echoes the fundamental values and principles of this Evangelic institution that almost put 'woman' and 'mother' as synonymous (Gaitskel, 1983; Hassim; 1993).

'Doing it for the children'.

The idea that these women worked 'for their children' also came out when I had a discussion with them about condom use. They referred to the importance of their sexual health in relation to them needing to stay healthy because they had to take care of their children. One of the questions I asked my respondents was if they condomised and what happened if a client did not want to use a condom. Sesi, who was one of the sisters in the dual interview, said:

"I use a condom every time, and I always use my own condoms because I can make sure that they have not expired and things like that, I have a son who is only 13 so I have to take care of myself, I go to the clinic for check-ups and I am on birth control… my staying healthy is more important than money, I don't do business without a condom".

Thula who seemed like a very reserved woman who liked to keep to herself answered:

"definitely ,I have a child to take care of, I cannot afford to sleep with a client without a condom. My daughter is at home and she is still young (home was Zimbabwe, her daughter was six years old at the time of the interview)".

Naledi revealed her HIV positive status when she was telling me about how she grew up. After she revealed her status I asked her about the status of her children.

"No *my children are fine, the thing about me is that I never forget to go to the doctor and check that everything is ok… Yoh I would never have sex with them without a condom, I care about my clients and I am aware of the dangers of re-infection. I have to take care of myself for the sake of my children." (*paraphrased)

I got to know Beauty very well over the course of my research because I managed to stay in constant contact with her for about a month after our interview before she went back home (Lesotho). During the time of the interview Beauty was not in a very good space because she was worried about her health. She told me that she had been having her menstruation periods non-stop since she had her *"prevention injection*" which was about 3-4 weeks prior. She

suspected that it was because her body was reacting to the injection because she had been on it for at least a year and maybe she needed a stronger dosage. She was worried about what was going on with her because her child was young and her mother was not working at the time:

> *"eix Mahlako I am very worried about this thing you know, at first I thought it would just pass and it was the injection. My periods were not stable because of the injection I could go three months without getting any then like get a period the one month and so on. But now; and it's a heavy flow and it's a long time now... Mahlako I'm not Ok hey, my mom is getting old now and my son is young. I don't want my mom to suffer any longer and strain herself working at the kitchens* (this means her mother was a domestic worker) *anymore. I mean my son is very young he is still in primary…. and my son is sick hey, I don't know what's wrong with him but my mom said that he has had a fever for a few days now and he didn't go to school yesterday. Eix, I haven't made money in the last few days and I can't go home empty handed and I don't have money to take my child to the clinic. My son comes first so I can't spend money to go check myself out while he is sick you know."*

Beauty, Naledi, and Thula expressed that they became sex workers because they wanted to live better lives. They wanted the 'nicer' things in life, but most importantly, they wanted to give their children a better life and better opportunities than they had available to them. These women became sex workers because of a lack of employment opportunities. Women were historically excluded from the political and economic realm which was one of the ways that 'society' functioned to keep females dependent on men. Anne McClintok (1993) argued that

the concept of nationhood in South Africa and globally was constructed in a way that institutionalised gender differences. This process was politically mediated in a way that gave men more access to nation-state resources than women (McClintok, 1993). This is changing slowly in contemporary society but the pattern still dominates. Men are given preferential employment and in many industries men are paid more than women. This leaves women to come up with other ways to make an income; barriers into the formal job market leads to a rise in informal precarious forms of employment.

These women emphasised the importance of caring and taking care of their children. Joining the sex work industry was seemingly a move they made so they could be able to provide better economic opportunities for their children. This elucidates the positioning of the woman as the primary care giver. It takes a man and a woman to make a child but most of the time the woman is the one who remains with the responsibility of caring for the child while the man seemingly is excused from taking care of his child.

'The child as a proxy: The two become 'one'.

Beauty was married to an abusive man and when she left him; she was left unemployed and could not find a job that paid enough for her to support her child. After they married, she became completely dependent on this man because she did not work. According to her, once this man became aware that she needed him he became abusive.

> *"I realised that if I stayed with this guy I was going to end up six feet under. He used to shout and swear at me all the time, I always had blue eyes, bruises, if he found me chilling with friends he would get angry and accuse me of being a whore and that we are just sitting around*

whoring and talking about men. If I'm sitting alone he would accuse me of thinking about whoring around, if I cooked too early then I was rushing to go whore around, if I cooked too late then I was lazing around thinking about whoring".

She still stayed with him "*for the sake of my child*", she had not been working for a long time and she needed him to support her child. The final straw was when her husband disappeared for days at the end of the month knowing very well that there was no food at the house for the baby: "*I don't care if I don't eat but my baby, please***".** He did not care much about the fact that the baby had not eaten and was not remorseful when he eventually went back home: "*he said to me I whore around so I should have whored around to get money for my baby's food*". That is when she packed her bags and went back home to live with her mother.

Naledi was also in a relationship with an abusive man who was a police officer:

"So then I met this Afrikaans man and I lived with him for seven years, and we had a child together who is now three years old. I depended on this man and he provided for me and my kids, I met him while I was working but then I lost my job. Then this man became abusive not physically but emotionally, he *would bring girls home and so on".*

Naledi also stayed with this man because she depended on him financially to support her children. There was a time when Naledi left this man and ran away to Durban to try to find a

job and make a life for her children. She later returned back to the man because he took care of her kids.

> *"He is a BASTARD, HE IS A BASTARD!! the things that he does but then you know what, he has a good heart. He is a good person but there is just something that is mixed up in the middle because right now he stays with my daughter we have a daughter together, but my son is not his he stays with him but he is not his. He takes care of both of them."*

In other words she regarded this man as a good man regardless of how he treated her because he took care of her kids. These women stayed in abusive relationships with men because they were not employed and they needed these men to support their children. This says something that is profound about maternal love and the internalisation of the mother role.

Baraitser (2009) argued that it is more 'useful' to understand love as an outcome of another's experience that can be taken back as one's own. This means that at that given moment, the distinction of the two is dissolved making love a "process of negotiating the paradox, meaning that there is no third that can ascertain that there is love" (Baraitser, 2009; 273). In this view presented by Baraitser, to understand this concept of maternal love we need to observe the singular events that are visible that initiate the procedures that illustrate actions that show love. She presented this argument by observing moments when a mother cried because of a child to understand the profundity of a mother's love. When a woman becomes a mother, the child becomes part of the mother therefore the two become one. Her perspective of the world changes as she now sees it from the point of view of the two as soon as she realizes that she loves the child (Baraitser, 2009). This conceptualisation of the relationship

between mother and child where the child comes to dominate or becomes more important than the mother echoes Jessica Benjamin (1980)'s theorisation of erotic domination.

Jessica Benjamin (1980) conceptualised the relationship between a mother and her child by arguing that male dominance and rationality objectified and 'othered' women by practically denying their existence. The domestic role that she was given and pushed into and her task as a mother allowed her a space to reclaim her subjective existence; in this light, her value was invested in and existed in her role as a mother. Benjamin (1980; 167) argued that "male rationality and violence is linked with institutions that appear to be sexless and genderless but that exhibit some tendencies to control and objectify the other out of existence"; she called this process 'erotic domination'. Through this discourse a woman is socialised to internalise her maternal and domestic role as a mother, to an extent that she sees the way that her child turns out as a direct determinant of her success as a woman (Benjamin, 1980). She therefore becomes more interested in grooming her children to become representatives of what society recognises as success.

This elucidates Butler's (2009) notion that human beings have a need to be recognised and for them to be recognised they need to concede to roles and institutions that recognise the roles that they play. So then a woman in this role becomes vulnerable to her child and to public opinion therefore she will invest her time in nurturing her children. This reveals a tense relationship between recognition and differentiation which reproduces the tendency towards patriarchal rationality (Benjamin, 1980). Conceding to this rationality leads to normativity and allows for male rationality and dominance to prevail.

The stories that are outlined above highlight moments that illustrate the way that these women conceded to this notion of a woman as someone who completely embraces and is defined by motherhood. Man is recognised as a subject in his own right but woman is recognised only in her relationship and link with her children. Therefore the 'self-less' love for their children that these women communicated was influenced by a dominant patriarchal culture that constructed woman as a subject only through a proxy which is her child.

'Good mother'

One of the interview questions were "According to you, is there such a thing as a good mother? If so then how would this person be?" The answers that these women gave revealed different elements that illustrated the relation of the love of the child vis-à-vis the creation of the self.

A good mother is: *"A good woman is someone who understands everything, somebody who can sit you down and say my children you have a problem with your man, understand this, don't be a woman and act like a man. Think like a man. If you think that guy is going to be faithful to you then you are going to kiss a lot of frogs and never find prince charming. A good woman is someone who sees every child as their child. A job as a mother is never done. Everybody is a child no matter how young or old you are. It's not disgraceful for you to find a child doing something wrong on the street and set him/her straight, advise the child and tell them listen here I have been there done that."- Naledi*

An analysis of Naledi's response brings out important elements about her perception of a good mother. It is important to observe the way that she used 'woman' and 'mother' interchangeably and synonymously which speaks to her internalisation of the woman/mother identity. Secondly she says "*don't be a woman and act like a man*"; this emphasises her view that there is a certain way that a woman must behave which infers to her 'intention' to teach her daughter to concede to the patriarchal gender norms that dominate. "*If you think that guy is going to be faithful to you then you are going to kiss a lot of frogs and never find prince charming"* this says that she must not expect to find a man who will be faithful to her therefore she must concede to and settle into a space where she accepts that that the male is allowed to have different sexual partners while she stays playing the role of a virtuous woman.

Her mentioning her daughter finding prince charming reveals her yearning and her desire for her daughter to have a nuclear family which is something she did not have at the time of the interview; she attached significant value to having a male companion/marriage. "*A good woman is someone who sees every child as their child:* this illustrates her embracing the identity of a good woman as the mother of the nation. I also found the fact that she placed emphasis on and only referred to her raising her daughter interesting because she also had a son.

> **A good mother is:** *"Someone who takes the time to spend time with and listen to what their child has to say. Your child must be comfortable enough to come and share with you everything about their life. You must realize that what you do affects the child and must try do*

everything you can to make sure that your child is safe and taken care of". Sesi

Sesi 's view illustrates how she saw herself and her child as connected, she saw her child as being a part of who she is in that she placed importance on always being conscious of the 'fact' that what a mother does affects her child.

A good mother is: *"A good mother is someone who knows how to discipline her children. Someone who makes sure that their children are safe and are provided for."-Thula*

Thula placed emphasis on disciplining her child. This was very interesting because discipline refers to keeping your child in order which infers to restricting their behaviour within certain predetermined boundaries. As I mentioned earlier, Thula seemed like a very 'reserved' woman: she spoke with a soft tone, she sat 'like a lady' with her legs positioned tightly together, she was not really slouching during our conversation, she was not drinking straight from the bottle and when she picked up her glass her Pinky finger was elevated a little while the other fingers were firmly on the glass. Her demeanour fit within a painting of a 'traditionally' well groomed woman. Therefore when she spoke about discipline it inferred to her instilling the dominant traditional evangelistic gendered norms within her children.

'Conclusion'

Sex work is a 'socially deviant' profession in that it involves a population of people (mostly women) who are 'supposed' to protect their chastity, but instead sell sex. However these women in this study try to 'fit in' and they still uphold values of patriarchy and male rationality. The sex work population represents a group of women who are rebelling against the male dominant rationale of reality. This reality is one that accepts patriarchal norms and

values, which are reinforced through society's institutions like media, religion and culture, as the 'natural' order of society. According to the dominating norms of society, they represent an image of what a woman should not be like because their work is seen as immoral and as an undignified way to make a living. Reviewing the profound way that these women communicate the love they have for their children while considering the politics involved when trying to reconcile the love of the child vis-à-vis the creation of the self, revealed the complexity and the political actuality of 'motherhood'.

Women experience and understand their roles as mothers differently therefore the identity of 'motherhood' cannot be universalised. The mother role needs to be conceptualised in a way that acknowledges its political, historical, and contradictory realities. Taking this perspective seriously exposes the deeply embedded myth of maternal love and motherhood. This brings about the need to consider the possibility that affirming their social roles as mothers could be one of the ways in which the women in my study dignified and re-valued their sense of work in a more positive way. This possibility is evident when we review the profound way in which the view of women as 'mothers of the nation' has historically dictated the way that society is organised. Historically the domestic space and the identity of 'mother' has been the only place that a woman could claim her subjective existence when she was denied citizenship and recognition in other spaces of society. Sex workers face different struggles and experiences to other women who are not directly involved in the sex work industry. Furthermore each and every one of them faces their own struggles and experience life differently from the next.

These women espoused the identity of the mother icon which ignores the burdens of motherhood through insisting on a super woman persona. It could be argued that having

children made these women's lives harder as they were already struggling before they had children therefore motherhood could be seen as a burden in their lives. Acknowledging the complex nature of motherhood elucidates a frame that is useful when conceptualising maternal love and the profundity of the value that the women in my study placed on their roles as mothers. However when we think through the politics of motherhood we must keep in mind that this discourse is not one that is imposed purely by men from 'above' but is produced out of resonance held by women themselves and which fit in their daily reality. It is something that is internalised by women to an extent that they accept it as a 'natural' discourse and that mothers instil in and pass on their children.

CONCLUSION

Judith Butler in her book called 'Frames of war: When is life grievable' (2009; 24) argued that; "the differential distribution of grievability across populations has implications for why and when we feel politically consequential affective dispositions such as horror, guilt, righteous sadism, loss, and indifference". According to Butler (2009) society abandons and ends up destroying populations that do not conform to Western norms that dictate what it is to be human. These 'rebellious' lives or populations are not considered grievable and are in turn made targets of humiliation in order to protect the lives and the norms that are followed by those whose lives are considered worthy (Butler, 2009).

Her argument was based on an analysis of the way that the losses of lives was justified during war times by basing it on a framework that made some populations' lives more valuable than others (Butler, 2009). However, the increasing use and evolution of media in modern society is exposing us to the lives and struggles of other populations which is changing the way in which we see and perceive those populations (Butler, 2009). She argued that human life is precarious in that the human body is a vulnerable entity as it is from birth exposed to external factors that are uncontrollable and unpredictable, and that could kill it at any time (Butler, 2009). In this view the body itself presents boundaries, challenges, and threats to body/work/labour. Acknowledging the precarity of life and conceptualising sex work as body work allows us to acknowledge sex workers not as objectified victims but as a population that encapsulates our own vulnerability and agency.

In this light we are becoming increasingly aware of the vulnerability of our bodies and the precarity of life exposing us to the fact that we are bound to other people. This realisation

affects our sense of self and questions the notions that we had about our sovereign selves; these sovereign selves that were constructed by strategies of separation by the nation- state during wars. The body is a social ontology that is crafted by frameworks that function in society to make it a recognizable entity (Butler, 2009). Dominant norms and values dictate what is deemed recognizable as they influence how human beings identify with themselves, others, and life in general. These frames and morals set boundaries of what life is; therefore, it is difficult to recognise life outside the frames in which it is given (Butler, 2009).

These boundaries constitute the conditions that set how we come to identify life. In this view, all thinking about life is precarious and assigns unfavourable conditions to certain populations exposing them to injury, violence, and death (Butler, 2009). This institutionally conditions and creates iconic versions of 'good' populations that are grievable and others whose loss is not deemed significant and is thus set as being un-grievable (Butler, 2009). This process is not deterministic but is rather political and contradictory because these normative schemes and institutions are always affected and interrupted by one another as well as the changing institutional operations of power relations (i.e. relations of power are affected by the rise of technology) (Butler, 2009).

Taking Butler's view as a point of departure allows us to begin to conceptualise one of the potential reasons why sex workers are 'othered' in society. In this instance the iconic version of the population would refer to the expectations that are set out by a patriarchal organisation of life/ rationality. The sex work population has been regarded as ungrievable and it has been othered as sex workers are regarded as people who are disrupting the social order. Reports of rape and violence on sex workers are seemingly seen in society as normal; they are actually hardly reported by the media because the reaction is that 'she asked for it'.

The rape crises centre outlined that one of the most prevalent myths about rape is that sex workers cannot be raped which is not true because sex workers have human rights and they have "the right to refuse sex just like anyone else" (Rape Crisis cape Town Trust, accessed 10/03/2014). In other words, according to dominant views in society she cannot be raped and it's fine if she is hit because she is used to it. This reaction then says that the nature of her work takes away her human dignity, or any claims that she could have to dignity and human rights to choice, which complicates the very definition of rape itself in that it is 'sex without consent'. In this view the consent of a woman who is not a sex worker is recognised and taken seriously whereas the 'consent' from a sex worker is not significant?

Sex workers are not given similar levels of dignity and respect because they fall outside the moral frame of womanhood. However this is changing with the increasing influence of technology which is allowing sex work activist groups to make a noise and allows the wider society a look into the human realities of sex workers and their lives. Technology provides a media to expose the lived realities of sex workers which allows society to somehow see themselves in these sex workers. This is breaking down the illusion that we are separate sovereign selves. This could explain the increasing support from the wider populations for the decriminalisation of sex work. Perhaps the increasing protection of sex workers from society speaks to the realisation that our precariousness is their precariousness and theirs is ours.

The political organisation, considering the power of the nation-state, of these mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that expose certain groups to maximum precarity by exposing them to arbitrary violence from the state does it in a way that leaves them no other option but to appeal to the state for protection (Butler, 2009). Therefore these 'unrecognised' groups appeal for protection to the very institutions that institute the violence. Manoek (2012) in partnership

with SWEAT and Sisonke published research called “stop harassing us tackle crime”. Their report showed that sex workers suffered significant levels of abuse and police brutality. The Sex Workers in their study told of times when police officers would arrest them and put them in cells at the station for the whole weekend without even registering them in the system (Manoek, 2012). Some police officers would force the women to have sex with them for free using threats of arrest, and so on (Manoek, 2012). According to Manoek (2012) sex workers faced the most violence from clients and police officers. In this light protection from violence by the nation-state exposes them to violence of the nation state meaning they exchange one form of violence for another (Butler, 2009).

The recognition of sex work(ers) put sex work on the political agenda and led to sex work being included in state legislation. The inclusion of sex workers into law exposed them to violence from the state and gave the state space to set boundaries that increasingly painted them as people who disrupted the social order. This contributed to the precarity of sex work that increased and constructed the type of and the level of violence that they are exposed to. This is evident in the increasing levels of police abuse and arrests of female sex workers as opposed to clients. Somehow the state continues to justify the criminalisation of sex work and in turn condones this violence (police officers are part of the power of the nation- state). Therefore this shows that precarity is not produced by the inclusion or exclusion into law but is produced by the effects of “illegitimate legal coercion itself where the exercise of state power is freed from the constraints of law” (Butler, 2009; 29).

Thinking of sex work in this way then has implications for and elucidates the urgency to think through the body as a social ontology in that the meanings attached to it are constructed and reconstructed by the experiences of individuals, society, and changing power relations. In this

sense then human beings are entangled, controlled by and can be victimised by the very societies in which they live. This report has shown that gendered subjectivities of sex workers are evidently more complicated than the dominant research on sex work exposes; they are not limited to a choice of agency versus exploitation and coercion. There is something valuable and 'touching' when exploring the complex ways in which these women claimed autonomy over their selves and their bodies; and how they constructed and attached pride to their identities in a context where society 'denies' them dignity and objectifies them because of the 'deviant' work that they do.

The work that they do is highly stigmatised and sometimes puts sex workers in dangerous situations. The women in this study joined the sex work industry because of economic constraints and lack of 'job' opportunities. Furthermore they became sex workers because of the earning potential that the industry presented compared with other job options available to them. The character of their work is not so great and their profession is highly devalued however these women found ways to revalue the sense of their work. There are elements of agency that are present in this process of revaluing themselves in their work however the exercise of agency is a lot more fluid and open. In analysing how they perceive their work taking seriously the complexity of gendered constructions we also need to pay attention to various ways that they re-embed their sense of control over their work; i.e. through emphasising their ability to choose clients.

Seeing sex work through the lens of embodiment allows us the ability to reinterpret meanings of the body, sexuality, relationships, and intimate connections that have been closed off by dominant patriarchal institutions that keep us focused on a certain limited construction of sexuality that fits with 'traditional' notions of the body. Furthermore, these women used the

identity of motherhood which has been ascribed to them to reaffirm their subjective power and to re-dignify themselves and their work. Taking seriously the historical constructions of womanhood and the mother identity reveals that motherhood provides a space that allowed these women to claim respectability in society.

Ignoring the complexity of sexuality and embodiment hinders us from seeing how these women construct and understand the 'real' sense of who they are. In other words I acknowledge the fact that their job is traumatic and objectified and I am not excusing the violence that occurs in that space. However we need to take seriously the more complicated reality in that there is something real in observing their senses of pleasure and choice; she still says 'I am here, and I want to be here'. There is something that is worth noting about their insistence to stay in sex work which can be deemed as terrible in many ways. There is something about society's discomfort in acknowledging fundamental questions about these politics of sexuality that suggest that it is not that these women are not valuable however it is painful to see the real them. It is painful because we know, but we are trying to deny, the fact that we are bound to other people which affect our senses of self. Therefore we need to come to a place where we acknowledge the complex and precarious nature of the body, society, and the self and honour that these women are complex subjective beings who choose to be and live in a certain way just like we all are.

REFERENCE LIST.

Ally, S. (2009). "Conclusion: Formalization of paid domestic Work versus Socialization of Reproduction?" In *From Servants to Workers: South African Domestic Worker and the Democratic State*. Ithaca: ILR Press. Pp 184-194.

Anonymous.. Qualitative Research Methods Overview. Accessed online: (15/11/2013). URL: http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf

Arrighi, G. (1994). Introduction. The Long Twentieth Century. London: Verso, pp1-26.
Baraitser, Lisa, 2009. 'On Mother's Love and Unexpected Weeping' in *Maternal Enconuters: The Ethics of Interruption*, Routledge.

Brent,B., & Crystal,J. (2013). Gender, Emotional Labour, and Interactive Body Work: Negotiating Flesh and Fantasies in Sex Workers' Labour Practices. In Wolkowits, C., Cohen, R.L., Sanders, t., and Hardy, K.(Ed). *Body/Sex/Work: Intimate, Embodied, and Sexualised Labour*. Palgrave macmillan.

Babbie, E., & Moutton, J. (2001) *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Barchiesi, F. (2011). *PRECARIOUS LIBERATION: Workers, the State and Contested Social Citizenship in Postapartheid South Africa* . UKZN Press. Pp 1-139.

Benjamin, J. (1980). The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination. Feminist Studies. 6 (1). 144-174.

Butler, J. (1993). 'Bodies that Matter', in *Bodies that Matter*. New York: Routledge.

Butler,J. (2009). Introduction: Precarious life, grievable life. In "*Frames of war: When Is Life Grievable*". Verso: United Kingdom.

Butler,J. (2009). Chapter 1: survivability, Vulnerability, Affect, in "*Frames of war: When Is Life Grievable*". Verso: United Kingdom.

Clarkson, J., (2005). 'Contesting Masculinity's Makeover: Queer eye, Consumer Masculinity, and "Straight-Acting" Gays', *in Journal of Communication Enquiry*. 29:3 (July 2005):235-255.

Collins, J. (2006). Redefining the boundaries of work: Apparel workers and community unionism in the global economy." In *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. Vol. 13: 9-31.

Commission for Gender Equality (2013). Decriminalising Sex Work in South Africa: Official Position of the Commission for Gender Equality.

Cornwall, A. (1997). Men, masculinity and 'gender in development'. In *Gender & Development.*

De Beauvoir,S. (1997) "Introduction to the Second Sex", in Nicholson, L. (Ed.) 1997. *The second Wave: A Reader in feminist Theory.* New York and London: Routeledge.

Douglas, M. (1966). Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. Routeledge: London.

Douglas, S.J. & Michaels, M. (2004). The Mommy Myth: The Idealisation of Motherhood and how it has Undermined All Women. Free Press: New York.

Ehrenreich, B. & Hochschild, A.R. (2003). Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy.

Gaitskel, D. (1983). Housewives, Maid, or Mothers. *Journal of African History: The History of the Family in Africa.* 24 (2). 241-256.

Gatens, M., (1992) "Power, Bodies and Difference", in Barrett, M. & Phillips, A. (Eds). *Destabilising Theory*. Cambridge Polity Press.

Gould, C, & Fick, N. (2008). "Selling sex in Cape Town: Sex Work and Human Trafficking in aSouthern African City". Pretoria/Tshwane: Institute for Security Studies.

Guest, G., Namey, E.E., Mitchel, M.L. (2013) "Chapter 3: Participant Observation". In 'Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research. SAGE Publications.

Grosz, E., (1992) "What is Feminist Theory?" in Crowley, H., & Himmelweit, S., *Knowing Women: Feminism and Knowledge*, UK: Polity.

Hantrais, L. and Mangen, S. (1996) *Cross-National Research Methods in the Social Science.* London/New York: Pinter.Hassim, S. (1993). "Family, Motherhood, and Zulu Nationalism: The Politics of the Inkatha Women's Brigade". *Feminist Review: Issues for Feminism.* 43. 1-25

Hochschild, A.R. (2003) “Chapter 1: Exploring the Managed Heart”.In Hochschild, A.R.“*The managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human feeling”*. University of California Press.

Irigaray, L,. (1985) “Women on the Market”. In Irigaray, L. *This Sex which is Not One* (tr. By C. Porter). Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Katbamna, R.S. (2010). “Hooking in Joburg”. United Kingdom: Ethnic Quota Productions. Available: http://vimeo.com/55526455. Accessed: 17/05/2013.

Kenny, B. (2004). “Selling Selves: East Rand Retail sector workers fragmented and reconfigured” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30(3): 477-498.

Korczynski, M. (2003). “Communities of Coping: Collective Emotional Labour in Service Work”. Pp 55-79. Vol. 10(1). Louborough University Business School: UK.

Longhurst,R. (2003). “Semi-structured interviews and Focus groups”. In Clifford, N., French, S., Valentine, G. (Ed) *Key Methods in geography*. London: Sage.

LeCompte, M.D. & Schensul,J.J. (1999). What is Ethnography. In LeCompte M.D. & Schensul,J.J (Ed) *Designing Ethnographic Research* Altamira Press: UK

Lewis, D., Kuzwayo, E., Ramphele, M. (1999). Gender Myths and Citizenship in Two Autobiographies by South African Women Author(s). In *Agenda Feminist Media Stable*. 40. 38-44.

Lucas, A.M. (2013) Race, Class, Gender, and Deviancy: The Criminalization of Prostitution. In *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law, & Justice*. 10(1): 47-60

Manoek, S.L. (2012). Stop Harassing Us Tackle Real Crime: A report on human rights violations by police on sex workers in South Africa. Cape Town: Women’s legal Centre.

News24online (2013). Decriminalisation of prostitution remains on agenda. 21 October. URL: **http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2014/01/17/anc-should-stand-up-for-prostitutes-sisonke**. Accessed: 20/02/2014.

Overall, C. (1992). What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work(s). Pp. 75-701. Vol 17 (14). The University of Chicago Press Stable. URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174532 .Accessed: 03/10/2012.

Parrenas, R.S. (2003). "The Care Crisis in the Phillipines: Children and Transnational Families in the New Global Economy". In Barbara Ehrenreich & Arlie Russel Hochschild (Ed). *Global Women; Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. Metropolitan Books: New York.

SANAC. (2013). The South African National Aids Council. Accessed 20/02/2014. URL: http://www.sanac.org.za/resources/cat_view/7-publications/9-reports

Sarantakos, S (1983). Chapter 3: feminist Research. In Sarntako, S. (Ed) *Social Research fourth Edition*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Smart, C. (1992). Chapter 1: Disruptive Bodies and unruly sex: the regulation of reproduction and sexuality in the nineteenth century. *In Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on marriage, motherhood, and sexuality*. Routelage: USA.

Sowetanlive (2014). ANC should stand up for prostitutes: Sisonke. 17 January. Accessed 05/03/2014. URL: **http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2014/01/17/anc-should-stand-up-for-prostitutes-sisonke**

Silverman, D. (2004). "Who cares about 'Experience'? Missing Issues in Qualitative Research". In D, Silverman's (Ed.), *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*. London: Sage.

Southern African Legal Information Institute (2002). Jordan and Others vs. the State: Media Summary. Accessed 15/10/2013. URL: http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/2002/22media.pdf
South African Law Reform Commission (2013). SALRC Home. Accessed 14/02/2014. URL: http://www.justice.gov.za/salrc/.

Steward, A. (2013). Legal constructions of Body Work. In Wolkowits, C., Cohen, R.L., Sanders, t., and Hardy, K.(Ed*). Body/Sex/Work: Intimate, Embodied, and Sexualised Labour*. Palgrave macmillan.

Turley, M. (2012). "Relying on Sex to Survive: The Fight for Decriminalization in South Africa". August, 31. Washington: Pulitzer Centre. [Online]. http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/south-africa-sex-work-decriminalization-sweat-womens-legal-centre. Accessed: 04/10/2012.
Valocchi, S., (2005). 'Not yet Queer Enough: The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of Gender and Sexuality', in *Gender and Society*, Vol 19 No. 6, December 2005.

Vincent, S. (2011). The Emotional Process: An Essay on the Economy of Feelings. Vol. 64 (10). University of Leeds: United Kingdom.

Walby, S. (1990). "Introduction". In *Theorising Patriarchy*. Basil Blackwell Ltd: Cambridge.
Weedon, C. (2000) 'Postmodernism', in Jagger, Alison, M, and Young, Iris Marion (Eds.). *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*. Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Wolkowits, C. (2006). Bodies at Work. Sage Publications: London.

Wolkowitz, C., Cohen, R.L., Sanders, T. & Hardy, K. (2013) 'Theorising Body/Sex Work' in *Body/sex/work: Intimate, embodied and sexualised*. Basingstoke/GB: Palgrave McMillan.

Wojcicki, J.M., (2002) "She drank his money": Survival Sex and the problem of violence in Taverns in Gauteng Province, South Africa', in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. 16 (3): 267-293.

Zelizer, V. A. (2000) 'The Purchase of Intimacy' in *Law and Social Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Summer, 2000. pp 817-848.