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The Stripping Culture: An Analysis of Male and Female Strippers

On October 3, 2006, the hit television series Friday Night Lights premiered. Centering on a high school football team, relationship drama, and daily family life, Friday Night Lights was an instantaneous success, as teenagers and adults tuned in to NBC each week to follow the latest series of events and drama in small town Dillon, Texas. However, Friday Night Lights differs from other television dramas of the time, as a major side-plot of the show consisted of the local strip club, the Landing Strip. Over the course of five seasons, two of the show’s main female characters worked as female strippers, one main male character was arrested as a result of an altercation inside of the Landing Strip, and the high school football players frequented the strip club after school hours. Stripping was an integral part of the series, as most, if not all, characters had some connection to the Landing Strip, either as strippers or patrons. Six years later, on June 29, 2012, Warner Bros. released the Hollywood blockbuster, Magic Mike. A full-length feature film, Magic Mike follows the daily life and nightly stripping of “Magic” Mike, an experienced male stripper, as he mentors “The Kid,” a nineteen-year-old named Adam. Much of the film takes place within a male strip club, where the male strippers prepare themselves for their acts and perform several full-length stripping routines. Magic Mike’s portrayal of male stripping significantly differs from the depiction of female stripping found in Friday Night Lights, both in relation to the audience members at the strip clubs and the strippers themselves.

In this paper, I seek to outline the major differences between female and male stripping, as portrayed in Friday Night Lights and Magic Mike. I will focus on two main aspects of what I refer to as the “stripping culture” in both movies: the behavior of the male and female audience members in female and male strip clubs respectively, and the motivations behind entering into stripping as a career for both female and male strippers. First, I argue that the male patron’s
actions in the Landing Strip illustrate how female strippers are viewed in a derogatory manner, as male actions and language directed toward the women signify disrespect. Conversely, the actions of the female audience members in the male strip club in Magic Mike significantly differ from those of males in female strip clubs, as the female audience members are less aggressive than their male counterparts, and never initiate contact between themselves and the stripper, suggesting a higher level of respect for the male strippers. Secondly, I argue that in Friday Night Lights, female strippers are portrayed as working in the strip club out of necessity, paralleling academic literature that highlights how female strippers are objectified and often viewed as less than human, even when they are stripping to support themselves and their families. Conversely, from my analysis of Magic Mike, I intend to illustrate how male stripping is viewed as an active choice, or as a means to another, more desired, end, rather than as a last resort occupation necessary for survival or familial support. Finally, I conclude this paper with a brief analysis of how the combined discourses of post-feminism and neoliberalism result in a stripping culture in which male strippers, although viewed as deviant, are less criticized than their female counterparts. Ultimately, I argue that female strippers are placed in a double bind, in which they are objectified and overtly sexualized without reference to the structural inequalities and sexism that contributes to their negative portrayal as less than human.

**Behavior of Male and Female Audience Members at the Strip Club**

*Friday Night Lights*

In episode nine of the fifth season of Friday Night Lights, “Gut Check,” one of the main female characters, high school student Becky, begins working at the Landing Strip when Mindy, another character who also works at the Landing Strip, becomes ill and can no longer work. Dressed in a black halter-top and short skirt, with visible makeup on her face, and over-done
hair, Becky begins to waitress to the male patrons at the strip club, serving them drinks. As Becky walks by the customers, one patron says “thanks baby,” visibly looking at her exposed stomach. Becky smiles flirtatiously and walks away, continuing to another table, where two men sit surrounded by empty beer bottles and half-smoked cigarettes. One of the men is receiving a lap dance from a scantily clad dancer, and as the camera zooms out, at least half of the other patrons are also receiving a lap dance from a female stripper. The music is muted, the atmosphere is relatively calm, and one man is standing around the stage watching a single female stripper dance on a stripper pole. As Becky approaches another patron, recites his drink order, and hands it to him, he looks up and says, “what’s that darlin,’” apparently just noticing her arrival. After telling Becky what credit card his tab is under, the male patron sits back in his chair, crosses his hands behind his head, and asks Becky “when are you gonna be up there,” pointing to the stripper pole. Becky replies, “well, we will just have to see wont we,” smiling seductively at the male patron. He proceeds to pull a wad of money out of his wallet, begins counting off bills, and asks Becky “what will it take?” He places several bills into the seam of her skirt, resting both of his hands on her exposed hips. He then asks Becky, “how’s that?” implying that the money he has paid her should result in her dancing on the stripper pole per his request. Becky answers, “you would have to spend a lot more of your money to get me up there,” and turning to watch her walk away he replies, “consider it a down payment?” Once again, this illustrates his willingness and ability to watch and pay Becky to dance on the stripper pole for his own personal enjoyment.

This scene in Friday Night Lights provides an interesting analysis of the behavior of male patrons in female strip clubs. Mindy S. Bradley-Engen and Jeffery T. Ulmer suggest that stripping “can be a relatively coercive experience, in which women have little control over their
work environment, or even over their own bodies” (Bradley-Engen 30). Consequently, they argue that the general environment of strip clubs is one in which a stripper “is compelled to modify her physical appearance to adhere to a male ideal, endures regular harassment and objectification, and has little opportunity to actively resist” (Bradley-Engen 30) male advances. Becky embodies all three of these characteristics in this scene, illustrating that the derogatory environment of female strip clubs is so pervasive that she was exposed to its effects even on the first day of her new job. Becky’s drastic change in dress and physical appearance, illustrated by her outfit, exaggerated makeup and different hairstyle from the previous episodes, suggests that Becky conforms to the unspoken requirement that she modify her body to appeal to the male gaze. In addition, her brief interaction with the male patron symbolizes the types of harassment that female strippers often experience, as the man imposes himself on her by physically touching her body and inserting dollar bills into the seam of her skirt. She also has little opportunity to resist, as he leans forward and places the bills into her skirt without her explicit approval. This interaction with the male patron provides a pertinent example of how encounters between female strippers and male patrons are based upon the needs and desires of the male patrons. Not only does Becky conform her physical appearance to meet the needs of the male patrons, but she also has no way of avoiding the patron’s sexual advances, as the male patron aggressively asserts himself in her presence.

Becky’s encounter with the male patron also relates to Bradley-Engen and Ulmer’s assertion that female strippers often “use speech and body language in their work, often feigning interest, flirting, or pretending to be what they perceive a specific customer finds appealing” (Bradley-Engen 31). Becky’s actions illustrate this concept, as she frequently smiles at the male patron in the scene in an arguably seductive nature, as well as by “playing hard to get” after he
essentially pays her to dance on the stripper pole for him. I suggest that Becky’s actions conform to this characteristic of female stripping, by making herself “more attractive to customers...[in order to] increase customer spending” (Bradley-Engen 31). Rather than putting her desires first, she conforms her actions and persona to conform to the desires of a male customer.

Becky’s actions provide a pertinent example of the qualities of a “Hustle Club” in which the “identity expectations for dancers [are] sex focused...and as objects for sexual gratification” (Bradley-Engen 39). The other strippers pictured in this scene also highlight the characteristics of a “Hustle Club” through the frequency of lap dancing, the multitude of strippers present, and the high numbers of customers on a weekday night (Bradley-Engen 38). Becky’s, and the other female strippers’, immersion in a Hustle Club, dictate that their actions be entirely directed toward the male audience through a sexual objectification of their body. They strip for the male gaze, not for any personal satisfaction. The Hustle Club qualities, as outlined by Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, also imply that even though the women appear friendly and interested in the male patrons, as illustrated by Becky’s flirtatious encounter with the male patron, in actuality, the female stripper has a “generally negative” (Bradley-Engen 40) view of the male patrons, as her job entirely centers on creating a pleasurable experience for the male.

Finally, Becky’s interactions with the male patrons illustrate Bradley-Engen and Ulmer’s assertion that “women are continually working in an environment that tolerates, if not encourages harassment” (Bradley-Engen 42). Although strip clubs have official “no touching allowed” rules, most strippers, including Becky, would describe frequent fondling or unwanted touching by the male audience members. Yet, the “management’s non-enforcement of their own touching policies” (Bradley-Engen 42) illustrates the blatant disregard for the female strippers by both male patrons and the structural establishment. Furthermore, the strippers “come to perceive
tolerance” (Bradley-Engen 42) as evidence of the lack of respect toward their physical bodies, and arguably mental wellbeing as human beings. Finally, although men experience “some stigma” (Frank 61) if they frequent strip clubs, “this stigma is relatively small when compared with that experienced by the women who work in clubs” (Frank 61) as the men often have “particular advantages over dancers in terms of educational and social capital (Frank 61). This disparity results in a view of female strippers as “less than human” and undeserving of basic respect.

_Magic Mike_

The female audience members at that male strip club in the blockbuster movie Magic Mike significantly differ from the male audience members in Friday Night Lights, as the female audience members are less aggressive and take measures to justify their presence at the strip club. For example, in each extended stripping scene in Magic Mike, the majority of the female audience members covers their mouth with their hands, presumably in an expression of shock, or are visibly engaged with their friends in response to the act. In contrast to the solitary nature of the Landing Strip, the male strip club is portrayed as a social event for women, as bridal showers, sorority parties, and “girls’ night out” occasions are almost always described as the audience’s motivation for attending that night’s show. Only on one occasion did a group come in a pair, but their justification for attending the strip show was based on the fact that one of the girls was turning 21, and was sexually interested in one of the movie’s main characters, Adam. In addition, the female members of the audience never initiated contact with the strippers; rather, when contact was initiated by one of the strippers the female members feigned acts of surprise and shock at the actions of the stripper.
In the article, “Ladies Night out: A Typology of Women Patrons of a Male Strip Club,” Beth Montemurro, Colleen Bloom, and Kelly Madell argue that “while women enjoyed the voyeuristic elements of the show, this was secondary to the shared experience of being at the club with friends and women bonding” (Montemurro 333). They argue that the motivations behind the audience members differ significantly based upon gender, as male “patrons came in alone or in small groups and rarely interacted with others they did not know,” (Montemurro 335) an argument that parallels the scene in the Landing Strip. On the other hand, female audience members are far more likely to attend “for a specific purpose or occasion, in many cases for bachelorette or birthday parties” (Montemurro 341) or as “virgins…who were at the club for the first time” (Montemurro 342). Montemurro et al. suggest that on an average night in a male strip club, over 60% of the female patrons attend as a result of a specific purpose or occasion, differing from the casual and consistent motivation of male patrons of female strip clubs (Montemurro 342). In addition, Montemurro et al, describes how the behaviors of the women, especially when in close proximity with male strippers, consisted of “looking out at her friends and making ‘oh my god’ faces…hugging their friends, high fiving, and talking excitedly about what they had just experienced” (Montemurro 343). Therefore, I argue that female patrons decision to attend a male strip clubs exists “not just, or even primarily about the dance, but rather [in order to strengthen] the patron’s relationships and connections with her friends” (Montemurro 343) contrasting with the male patron’s singular focus on the objectification of female strippers at female strip clubs for his own sexual pleasure.
Motivations Behind Stripping

Friday Night Lights

In this section, I examine how the motivations for females and males to enter the stripping culture are portrayed in Friday Night Lights and Magic Mike, ultimately arguing that female strippers are commonly depicted as stripping out of necessity, whereas male strippers strip for the enjoyment and the thrill that they gain from stripping, or as a means to a more attractive end. In Friday Night Lights, Mindy, one of the main female characters, is forced to stop working after she has her first baby. Visibly upset with the prospect of losing her job, Mindy frequently cites her pregnancy as an impediment to her financial independence from her husband, who is currently unemployed and seeking a source of income. In the next season, Mindy deals with the effects of her pregnancy, as she mourns that her “fat ass” and “stretch marks” result in her receiving less money from the male customers, as her body is not at the same physical standard that it was before she had her child. In addition, when she finally returns to work at the Landing Strip, she soon finds out that she is pregnant for a second time. Instead of being overjoyed with the knowledge that she will have a second child, Mindy begins to cry, upset because she will have to quit her job at the Landing Strip again, and will not be “able to help provide for this family.”

Becky also turns to stripping as a last resort, as her deadbeat father and mother, who leaves Dillon, Texas for a job opportunity, orphan her. Therefore, Becky, who coincidentally lives with Mindy, has no source of income and is struggling to participate in after-school activities, such as going to a school dance. Although Becky’s decision to strip is not necessary for her basic survival, as she has access to shelter and food, her entrance into stripping is primarily defined by the economic necessity to maintain her current lifestyle. She does not enter
stripping as a recreational activity; rather, her motivation to strip stems primarily from her desire to earn money so she can work toward an independent lifestyle, separate from her parents.

Research by Sweet and Tewksbury (2000) indicate that the majority of female strippers can be labeled as “the career dancer, who continued to work to make money” (Bradley-Engen 32). While a small minority of female strippers may be motivated by a “lifestyle centered on the consumption of drugs and alcohol” (Bradley-Engen 32) and by the rewards gained “through the act of being desired by others,” (Bradley-Engen 32) the majority of research indicates that most female strippers strip based upon economic necessity. This finding correlates with Mindy and Becky’s motivations for working at the Landing Strip, as both females are desperate for a source of income; Mindy to support her family and Becky to earn enough money in order to live independently.

In addition, research also illustrates that the presence of a family may be a motivating factor behind why many female strippers enter into the stripping culture, as they may be desperate for a way in which to support their children while maintaining their own independence and autonomy (Bradley-Engen). Therefore, although a minority of strippers strip in order to fund their drug habits or to “feel wanted” through male attention, the overwhelming majority of female strippers do not enter the profession out of desire to strip for a living. Therefore, if they do not explicitly state that they strip to support their families, which the majority of them do, they often describe their jobs as “entertaining” or as a way to “gain entry into a more glamorous profession, such as professional dancing, acting, or modeling” (Bradley-Engen 32). I suggest that describing their jobs in this manner allows the female strippers to justify their presence in a profession in which they are often disrespected or demeaned.
Magic Mike

While the motivations behind Mindy and Becky’s decision to work as female strippers at the Landing Strip are primarily justified by economic necessity, the male strippers in Magic Mike strip for three main reasons; to obtain an added source of income in addition to other jobs, to pick up women, and for enjoyment. After “Magic” Mike begins to mentor Adam “The Kid” he explains that male stripping is motivated by three main factors, “to meet hot women, earn extra cash, and have a damn good time.” Unlike Mindy and Becky in Friday Night Lights, Mike and the other strippers in Magic Mike strip as their second, or in some cases, third sources of income. For example, Mike owns a small construction company where he works during the day, and only strips at night in order to save enough money to open his own custom-made furniture company. Furthermore, Mike states that he intends to “leave the whole thing behind” once he saves up enough money to open his own business, suggesting that he does not view stripping as his permanent career. Rather, he views stripping as a means to another, more desirable, end. This contrasts to Mindy and Becky in Friday Night Lights, as working at the Landing Strip is the only source of income for the two women, and presumably their only employment option as Mindy only has a high school diploma and Becky is a current high school student.

In addition, although Adam’s entrance into stripping appears to be out of necessity, as he was recently fired from a job at Mike’s construction company, I argue that Adam chooses to work as a male stripper, rather then working out of economic necessity. In an early scene in the film, Adam tells his sister that he quit his job at the construction company because “the foreman fucking accused me of stealing so I fucking quit,” and also quit his job in a small business “because they made me wear a fucking tie, and you know how I feel about fucking ties.” Therefore, Adam had the option to enter another career, but instead chose to strip as his primary
source of income. He was not forced to enter the stripping culture, as he had previous valid
options for employment and a constant source of income.

I argue that the differences in the motivations between male and female strippers can be
attributed to larger structural inequalities. The opportunity to obtain employment remains higher
for men than women, even if both the male and the female have a similar level of education. For
example, in the scenes depicting Mike’s construction company, all of the workers are hired under
the table and arguably do not possess a degree higher than a high school diploma. In particular,
Adam is hired even though he is a recent college dropout and has no experience in construction.
This is “telling with respect to the power and enactment of these norms in everyday life,”
(Montemurro 335) as males have access to more employment opportunities, simply based on
their gender. Therefore, the majority of male strippers strip out of enjoyment or to earn money to
gain some other end, while female strippers often have few other options for sources of
employment outside of the strip club.

Finally, I argue that male strip clubs offer a space in which “men can experience their
bodies and identities in pleasurable ways” (Frank 61). In contrast to female strip clubs, where
females primarily dance on stripper poles or offer lap dances to paying customers, male strippers
primarily dance as part of a larger “show” (Montemurro 345). They wear costumes and enact
particular characters, as they often are given an “introduction…[in which the] dancer’s character
or persona (e.g., cowboy, doctor, mechanic, lifeguard) [is announced] before announcing his
name” (Montemurro 345). I argue that this also contributes to the differences in the culture of
male strip club and female strip clubs, as male strippers primarily dance for the enjoyment and
the entertainment they gain by stripping, specifically by acting in ways that suggest mutual
sexual enjoyment for the female audience members and for their own pleasure. Conversely,
female strippers often “fake enjoyment” (Bradley-Engen) in order to please their male customers, suggesting that the actual act of stripping has more benefit for a male stripper, as he enacts out his own sexual fantasies on “willing” female audience members.

**Analysis**

In the proceeding sections, I have demonstrated how the behaviors of audiences that attend strip clubs differ among male and female patrons. Male patrons are more likely to view female strippers in a demeaning light and actively engage with the strippers on an individual level. Conversely, female patrons primarily attend strip clubs in group settings, justifying their attendance by their over exaggerated reactions and laughing with their girlfriends, while simultaneously being exposed to manifestations of male-dominated sexual advances. In addition, the motivations differ for males and females when choosing to enter into the stripping culture, as females are often driven to strip by economic necessity and lack of other options, while male strippers often strip in addition to another day job or as a temporary means to a more attractive end. These disparities in the stripping culture cannot be discussed without an attempt to analyze why they exist. Why are female strippers viewed as less than human and provided with little respect by male patrons, when male strippers are arguably viewed as a form of temporary entertainment for large groups of women? Why do women often strip as a form of economic necessity when males have the option to choose to strip for their enjoyment or in order to obtain another source of income, instead of or in addition to other employment opportunities?

I argue that the disparity between how male and female audiences act in strip clubs and the differences in motivation for stripping primarily stems from the combined impact of post-feminism and neo-liberalism. By post-feminism, I refer to discourses resulting from reactions to second-wave feminism, emphasizing the “eradication of sexism to the extent that it no longer
exists” (Joseph 240). In other words, post-feminism implies that “feminism is cast into the shadows….where it might be regarded ambivalently by those young women who must, in more public venues, stake a distance from it, for the sake of social and sexual recognition” (McRobbie 11). Feminism is viewed as outdated, as women are assumed to have already achieved all they sought out to gain. By neoliberalism, I refer to discourses that place emphasis on individual choice and individual agency as motivating factors behind individual actions. This combination of post-feminist and neoliberal discourses creates a “double entanglement” (McRobbie 12), or a toxic environment for women, one characterized by choice, individualism, and lack of structural support or access to resources. As a result, female strippers are placed in a “double bind,” one in which they are objectified and overtly sexualized without reference to the structural inequalities and sexism that contribute to this negative, and often derogatory, portrayal of their life choices or decisions. In addition, although male stripping may be seen as a deviant form of masculinity, the male strippers are able to reassert their masculinity in order to conform to the appropriate “gender role,” and be seen as a representation of the correct form of masculinity. In the remainder of this paper, I attempt to articulate how these discourses work together, explaining how their profound impact on popular culture resulted in the media representations of female and male strippers in Friday Night Lights and Magic Mike respectively. In addition, I seek to use these discourses to describe why inequalities exist between male and female strippers by examining how these discourses are inherently gendered and place an added burden on female strippers.

One of the major components of post-feminism rests on the assumption of bodily surveillance, in which women are expected to conform to socially constructed ideals of physical beauty. As a result of the discourses surrounding postfeminism, females are placed under added
constraints to conform their bodies to appropriate standards of beauty, or the “hegemonic paradigms of sexuality, beauty, and feminity” (Zaslow 5) that dictate popular culture. Yet often, even though these standards of physical beauty are defined in accordance with the male gaze, because post-feminism foundationally holds that the structures of patriarchy that existed before the advent of feminism have been eradicated, the influence of the male gaze on the female body is not analyzed, or even acknowledged. Therefore, females are viewed as individually choosing to regulate and use their bodies in whatever manner they see fit, outside of structural and institutional factors. This aspect of post-feminism is highly relevant to the discussion of how ensuring the pleasure of the male patrons at the Landing Strip dictates the dress and behavior of the female strippers. Becky’s physical appearance in the first scene analyzed in this paper can be explained by her desire to conform to these standards of beauty, in which she consciously objectifies her body in order to appear more attractive to the male gaze. As a result of conforming to the male gaze, she will subsequently earn more money in tips, resulting in a cyclical nature in which a female stripper’s success depends on her ability to appropriately conform to the desires of the male patron. This also explains why Becky engaged in flirtatious behavior with the male patron, who essentially sexually assaulted her, as by making herself “more attractive to customers” (Bradley-Engen 31) she is able to earn more money. Therefore, even though post-feminist discourse posits that females are removed from the sexist pre-feminism sexual politics, Becky’s dress and actions illustrates the centrality and continued importance of the male gaze in dictating appropriate forms of feminity through methods of individual self-surveillance and regulation.

This discussion also correlates with Gill’s discussion of post-feminism, as she articulates how the notion of sexual empowerment that accompanies discourses of post-feminism
“mobilizes women’s ‘choice,’ agency,’ and ‘empowerment’ to champion aspects of ‘sexualized’ culture,” (Gill 1) including stripping. Therefore, Becky and Mindy’s decision to strip is removed from the wider structural factors that mandate the necessity of stripping in order to earn a sufficient income to support their families. Rather, Becky and Mindy’s decision to strip is attributed to their individual choices that resulted in their entrance into an occupation that may result in sexual harassment or derogatory treatment. Consequently, the motivations behind Mindy and Becky’s decision to strip are not acknowledged by the male patrons, as the structural inequalities that result in the economic necessity of their occupation as strippers are disguised by post-feminism and neoliberal discourses surrounding the importance of individual choice and agency. In other words, Becky and Mindy are viewed as personally responsible for their decision to enter stripping, attributed to the choices they made, rather than as an action motivated by extreme structural inequalities. This suggests that actions of male patrons at female strip clubs are influenced by the rhetoric of choice, in which the women are viewed as autonomous agents of their own lives, separated from any structural inequalities. I argue that the male patrons justify their treatment of the female strippers as sexual objects for their personal pleasure through this discourse of individual agency and choice, as the female strippers’ entry into stripping is viewed as a direct result of the poor choices that they made.

While post-feminist and neoliberal discourses influence how female strippers are treated by male patrons, I also argue that the discourses of post-feminism and neoliberalism can be used to offer an explanation for the actions of female patrons at male strip clubs. Rosalind Gill argues that the influence of discourses of post-feminism accompanies a general sexualization of culture, in which women are increasingly seen as desiring sexual subjects, willing to engage and participate in casual heterosexual sex. McRobbie refers to this post-feminist female as the
“phallic girl” (McRobbie 83) characterized by “giving the impression of having won equality with her male counterparts…by being asked to concur with a definition of sex as light-hearted pleasure, recreational activity, hedonism, sport, reward, and status” (McRobbie 83). Therefore, women are viewed as desiring sexual subjects, infused with the sexual agency and choice to participate in casual heterosexual sex whenever they choose, and with whomever they choose. In addition, the rise of post-feminism also accompanies an increase in what Gill labels “irony and knowingness” (Gill 17). She argues that post-feminist discourses have resulted in interactions with popular culture that “flatter…knowing and sophisticated consumers, flattering them…by the notion that they can ‘see through’ attempts to manipulate them” (Gill 17). I argue that these concepts are readily apparent in the reactions of the females at the strip club in Magic Mike, as they demonstrate the phallic girl through their simple presence at the club, and irony and knowingness in their implicit approval of the highly sexualized acts performed by the males depicting heterosexual sex. The females that attend actively cheer on the male strippers with their friends, representing the new post-feminist woman who is provided with the opportunity to fully embrace her sexuality. In addition, the theory of irony and knowingness intersects this concept of a phallic girl as the male shows often employ female audience members in ways depict violent or nonconsensual heterosexual sex. However, the post-feminist and neoliberal discourse that allow the emergence of the phallic girl and the rise of irony and knowingness, allow the male strippers to perform these actions with no consequences. Ultimately, the females in the audience possess the “knowingness” that it is just a show, making it appropriate for the show to include actions that would normally be viewed as sexual harassment or sexist.

Finally, I argue that the motivations behind the entrance of male strippers into the stripping culture significantly differs from female strippers due to the flexibility provided to
males that is not readily available to females. Although male strippers may be viewed as deviant from the correct form of masculinity, they are able to justify their identity as a stripper by overtly emphasizing character traits that conform to the correct form of “heteromasculinity” (Adams 280) in other areas of their life. Magic Mike, for example, works for a construction company, a stereotypical masculine occupation, as well as driving a big truck, wearing baggy pants, and maintaining an incredibly fit physique. Therefore, male strippers are able to avoid the stigma of being a stripper based upon their public assertion of stereotypically masculine traits in other areas of their life. This differs from the ability of females to reassert the correct form of femininity because appropriate femininity is inextricably bounded in post-feminist discourse. In addition, males are able to compartmentalize their lives, as demonstrated by Mike’s ability to work in multiple occupations, based on the privilege that men possess to reassert individual choice and agency in ways that are not structurally or institutionally constrained. Furthermore, Mike’s continual justification of his career in stripping as a means to another, more suitable, end, also demonstrates how male strippers are able to escape the structural and institutional constraints that severely limit the opportunities available to female strippers, who are viewed exclusively in terms of how their individual agency and choice lead to the necessity of their occupation as a female stripper.

An analysis of male and female strippers illustrates an extreme disparity between how the strippers themselves and motivations for becoming a stripper are perceived by the patrons of the strip clubs and the wider society, respectively. In addition, an analysis of female strippers at The Landing Strip in the hit television series Friday Night Lights and the male strippers in the Hollywood film Magic Mike, illustrate how the processes of post-feminism and neoliberalism inform how the strippers are displayed in popular media sources, based on gendered discourses
found in reality. Ultimately, female strippers are seen as less than human and viewed in a more derogatory manner than male strippers are, due to the inextricable discourses of post-feminism and neoliberalism, that emphasize individual choice and agency, while simultaneously ignoring structural and institutional inequalities. Conversely, males are provided with more flexibility in terms of employment opportunity and are able to evade being evaluated solely in terms of individual choice or agency due to the lack of structural and institutional constraints on their actions. Therefore, an analysis of male and female strippers illustrates how the discourses of post-feminism and neoliberalism affect all gendered sectors of society, resulting in an understanding of feminity and masculinity that severely restricts the amount of flexibility awarded to female expression of femininity, while providing males with the opportunity to assert various forms of masculinity.
Works Cited


