OUTSOURCING FAMILY:
CONSUMERS, CULTURE, AND MARKETPLACES FOR CARE & INTIMACY

(Integrated Article format)

by

Aimee Lynne <u>Huff</u>

Richard Ivey School of Business

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Western University
London, Ontario, Canada

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

Supervisor   Examiners

_____   _____
Dr. June Cotte   Dr. Russell Belk

Supervisory Committee

                                                          _____
                                                   Dr. Julie McMullin

_____   _____
Dr. Julie McMullin   Dr. Dante Pirouz

_____   _____
Dr. Allison Johnson   Dr. Andrew Perkins

The thesis by

Aimee Lynne <u>Huff</u>

entitled:

**Outsourcing Family:
Consumers, Culture, and Marketplaces for Care & Intimacy**

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Date_____   _____
                                                   Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

Abstract

In this thesis, I present an interpretive study of family members' experiences consuming market-offered care or intimacy services for themselves or other family members. Included herein is a series of three essays that explores different expressions of the phenomenon of outsourcing care and intimacy to the marketplace. The purpose is to develop a deep understanding of consumers' experiences as they engage with the marketplace to consume care and intimacy, and to demonstrate that this understanding forms the basis for theoretical developments in consumer research. This program of research stands to advance our understanding of consumption by linking theoretical conversations related to family consumption, social issues, and cultural influences on consumer behaviour.

In the first study, I study the experiences of mothers as they consume commercial childcare services upon returning to their careers from maternity leave. I reveal that cultural conceptions of the ideal mother complicate childcare consumption even for mothers who truly enjoy their careers and have found excellent childcare for their children, and I explore the facets and dimensions of this complex consumption context.

In the second study, examine the consumption experiences of families whose elderly family members require some form of commercial elder care. By weaving together the narratives of adult siblings and their elderly parents, I demonstrate that our cultural focus on living independently from other adult family members plays a key role in families' rather reluctant use of commercial elder care services.

In the third study, I explore adult males' consumption of a commercial sex service known as the girlfriend experience. In this particular service encounter, the service

provider and her client behave in an intimate, romantic manner, thereby exchanging both emotional and physical intimacy. I establish that our cultural perspective of commercial sex as taboo, and the consequential secretive nature of its consumption, are dominant factors in consumer pleasure in this context.

By attending to the relevant cultural conditions across each context, I reveal that the meanings ascribed to consumption phenomena by culture can shape consumption in positive, negative, and benign ways. The primary contributions of this thesis deeper understandings of: the ways in which culture can complicate the integration of commercial and family spheres of life; how family identity influences and is influenced by consumption; and, the blending of production and consumption in the context of services.

Keywords: Family Consumption, Consumer Culture Theory, Child Care, Elder Care, Girlfriend Experience, Commercial Care, Commercial Intimacy

Co-Authorship Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis incorporates some material that is a result of joint research. Essays 1 and 2 were co-authored with Dr. June Cotte. As the first author, I took the lead on both essays, including: formulating research questions, conducting the literature review, developing the research design, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and preparing the first complete draft of the manuscript. Dr. Cotte contributed as an adviser throughout the research process in Essays 1 and 2, and also by editing, refining, and revising the complete drafts. With the above exceptions, I certify that this dissertation and the research to which it refers, is fully a product of my own work. At the time of completion of this thesis, I also note that an abridged and refined version of Essay 1 is forthcoming at *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, and will appear as "Complexities of Consumption: The Case of Childcare," by Aimee Dinnin Huff and June Cotte. Overall, this dissertation includes 3 original papers, the third of which has been published as a book chapter.

Essay 3 – Status: *Published*

Huff, Aimee Dinnin, (2011) "Buying the Girlfriend Experience: An Exploration of the Consumption Experiences of Male Customers of Escorts," in *Research in Consumer Behavior, Volume 13*, ed. Russell W. Belk, Albert Muñiz, Hope Jensen Schau and Kent Grayson, Emerald, 111-126.

I certify that I have obtained permission from the copyright owners to include the above published materials in my thesis. Please refer to Appendix A for the copyright release. I certify that the above material describes work completed during pursuit of my Ph.D. at the Richard Ivey School of Business, Western University. I declare that my thesis does not infringe on copyright nor violate any proprietary rights. Further, I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other academic institution.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the opportunity to formally acknowledge the people that have enabled me to pursue and complete my doctoral degree. The process has been enjoyable, challenging, and enlightening, and I am exceedingly thankful for every ounce of support I have received along the way.

I owe enormous gratitude to my advisor, Professor June Cotte, who offered constant encouragement, guidance, and moral and material support throughout my time at Ivey and particularly in relation to my dissertation. From the beginning, June has pushed me to continuously expand on my research training, read widely, and pursue opportunities to engage in the consumer research community. She has challenged me to continuously improve my work, and has been an exceptional collaborator and coauthor.

My thesis committee members – Professors Allison Johnson and Julie McMullin – have been tremendously helpful and are very deserving of thanks. I also would like to acknowledge the Ivey Marketing faculty and doctoral students, who have been wonderfully supportive and friendly colleagues.

I cannot understate the importance of my family in helping me find the creative energy to finish this undertaking. My husband, Andrew, has been an incredible and unfailing source of support, always pushing me to think critically and be persistent. His patience, encouragement, and sense of humour have played an instrumental role in my ability to complete this journey. My little daughter, Mairéad, with her sunny disposition and endless curiosity, has been a loving source of inspiration and encouragement. And, finally, my dear parents, parents-in-law, brother, sisters-in-law, and friends have been magnificently patient and supportive, and I am so incredibly thankful for them.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Appendices

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research is inspired by an interest in how consumption is shaped by culture – that is, the symbolic and learned aspects of society. I am particularly intrigued by the ways in which contemporary families choose to consume care services offered by the marketplace rather than to produce the care themselves. A fundamental aspect of family life involves caring for and about each other, and, historically, many forms of caring were provided within the family; that is, in many households, the necessary forms of family care were produced internally. In this thesis, I present an interpretive study of family members' experiences consuming market-offered care or intimacy services for themselves or other family members. Included herein is a series of three essays that explores different expressions of the phenomenon of outsourcing care and intimacy to the marketplace.

In contemporary Western society, it is commonplace for individuals and families to pay service providers for care, such as childcare or elder care. These two facets of care services constitute the focal topics of my first two essays; I examine how mothers engage with the marketplace to choose and use daily childcare for their children, and I explore how families experience consumption of commercial elder care services. In the third essay, I examine how adult males interact with the sex service industry to purchase sex, and in doing so I examine a socially deviant expression of the same phenomenon as the first two essays: the purchase of commercial intimacy. Each essay makes unique and complementary theoretical contributions, and the thesis as a whole offers a rich understanding of consumer behaviour toward commercial offerings of care and intimacy.

1

Purpose and Contribution

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a deep understanding of consumers'

experiences as they engage with the marketplace to consume care and intimacy, and to

demonstrate that this understanding forms the basis for theoretical developments in

consumer research. This program of research stands to advance our understanding of

consumption by linking theoretical conversations related to family consumption, social

issues, and cultural influences on consumer behaviour. By focusing on social issues, my

research may also help to inform public policy that directs funding and initiatives related

to childcare, elder care, and the recent decriminalization of prostitution in Canada.

Further, this work responds to calls from consumer researchers for contributions to the

areas of family consumption (e.g., Commuri and Gentry 2000; Ekstrom 2004; Epp and

Price 2008), social issues (e.g., Mick 2006; Murray and Ozanne 1991), and cultural

influences on consumption (e.g., Arnould and Thompson 2005b; Fischer, Otnes, and

Tuncay 2007; Sandikci and Ger 2010).

By linking and advancing these theoretical conversations, this thesis also

addresses some suggestions that the field of consumer research stands to gain from

interpretive and critical inquiry into family consumption (Ekstrom 2004). The nature of

the methodological orientation in this thesis is important because interpretive research is

well-suited to address research questions pertaining to cultural influences on

consumption. Broadly speaking, then, this thesis may be classified as consumer culture

theory (CCT) research, which is now an established sub-field of consumer behaviour,

along with information processing, and behavioural decision theory (Macinnis and Folkes

2010). CCT, as a research tradition, is primarily concerned with developing empirical

advances in knowledge about consumer culture (Arnould and Thompson 2005b), and I have positioned this thesis within the extant CCT literature on sociohistorical and cultural patterns of consumption.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis is organized as follows: In this opening chapter, I review literature relevant to the overall themes in the research. I discuss key concepts and the relationships between them, and I identify the specific research questions pertaining to each essay. A more thorough account of the literature relevant to each essay is presented in the essays' respective chapters. Later in this chapter, I describe the common method used across the three essays, and give particular attention to the epistemological assumptions underlying the method.

In Chapter 2, I present the first essay, entitled "Complexities of Consumption: The Case of Commercial Childcare." This essay is a study of the consumption experiences of mothers choosing childcare as they return to the workforce from a maternity leave[1]. In Chapter 3, I present the second essay, entitled "The Instrumental Role of Consumption in Family Identity Enactments Across Generations and Households." In this essay, I explore the experiences of multiple adult family members choosing and using elder care services. Chapter 4, entitled "Buying the Girlfriend Experience: An Exploration of the Consumption Experiences of Male Customers of Escorts," is a study of male consumers' use of a commercial sex service known as the

---

[1] An abridged and refined version of this paper is forthcoming at *Journal of Consumer Affairs*.

"girlfriend experience," which is provided by escorts and call-girls. This study has been

published in *Research in Consumer Behavior*, and appears here with permission (refer to

Appendix A). In Chapter 5, I present a general discussion of the contributions of each

essay and the thesis as a whole, present a preliminary foundation for a theory of

outsourcing care/intimacy, and describe the opportunities for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I review literature pertaining, broadly, to family-oriented

consumption phenomena. The intent is to sketch the relevant theoretical landscape and to

situate my thesis within the consumer literature. I begin by introducing the research

tradition in which the thesis is embedded. Next, I review prior consumer research on

families and caring, followed by a review of context-rich research that explores cultural

influences on consumption. I conclude by discussing the research questions related to

each essay in this thesis, thereby demonstrating how the essays comprise unique yet

complementary developments in consumer research.

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)

This thesis explores the experiences of individuals as they choose and use care

services from the marketplace. I am particularly concerned with the ways in which these

consumption experiences are shaped by culture, and, therefore, I align this work with a

research tradition in consumer behaviour known as consumer culture theory (CCT).

In recent years research exploring experiential elements of consumption (i.e., CCT research) has gained wider acceptance in marketing and consumer behavior journals, including *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Culture*, and *Consumption, Markets & Culture*. This research has been characterized as "interpretive," "humanistic," "naturalistic," "subjective," "hermeneutic," or "postmodern" (Arnould and Thompson 2005b; Levy 2006), and was initially cast as alternative in that it differed greatly from experimental consumer research (Hudson and Ozanne 1988; Sherry 1991). Although these alternative researchers often have different approaches to their research, they generally share a theoretical orientation that focuses on the relationships between consumption and cultural meanings (Arnould and Thompson 2005a). To unify this alternative, culturally oriented consumer research, Arnould and Thompson (2005b) created an academic brand in a seminal essay in *Journal of Consumer Research*. They formally introduced the moniker "CCT" as a label for research that explored the experiential, sociocultural, and symbolic aspect of consumption. In contrast with more traditional consumer research, which draws heavily from economics and psychology in terms of theory and method, this burgeoning sub-field of research reflects anthropological and sociological orientations toward the study of consumption. Arnould and Thompson's essay has served to legitimize this tradition of research, by stressing the value of cultural perspectives in advancing the field. However, their academic brand also inadvertently suggested that CCT is a "cumulative theoretical corpus (i.e., Big T theory)" (Arnould and Thompson 2007, 6).

Arnould and Thompson (2007) have gone on to clarify misconceptions of their original essay, and have explicitly stressed that CCT is not a unified theoretical domain.

Rather, it is concerned with four broad areas, or themes, to which researchers can make theoretical and substantive contributions. These four thematic areas include: sociohistoric patterning of consumption, consumer identity work, marketplace cultures, and mass-mediated ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. The first links structural influences of class, gender, etc. with consumption behaviour. The second is concerned with the ways in which consumers' identity projects/work are shaped by cultural contradictions and marketplace conditions. The third involves an anthropological perspective on consumer culture and social behaviour, and the fourth links critical theory with consumers' interpretive and co-creative activities. Arnould and Thompson note that these four areas are not mutually exclusive, and most CCT research bridges at least two areas.

Research that falls within the CCT domain is diverse in terms of methodology and theoretical orientation, although, because it is context-rich, it often involves qualitative data in some form. CCT has become increasingly aligned with poststructuralism, feminist and critical inquiry, and interdisciplinary conversations (Arnould and Thompson 2007), such that within-CCT variations in method and theory are becoming as pronounced as variations between CCT and conventional (i.e., positivist, experimental) research (Moisander, Peñaloza, and Valtonen 2009). Arnould and Thompson (2007) stress that CCT research should not be cast as interpretivist, qualitative, or postmodern, and they underscore the necessity of making contributions to one (or more) of the four areas listed above rather than claiming a global contribution to CCT.

In regard to the four theoretical domains of CCT, this thesis is ultimately concerned with making advances in two areas: the sociohistoric patterning of

6

consumption, and mass-mediated ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. I draw primarily on CCT literature to position my research, and in the following section I review relevant literature on families and consumption. This review is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, the purpose is to broadly review literature relevant to the consumption of commercial care and intimacy, and to prepare the reader for the more detailed literature reviews presented in each essay.

Families and Consumption

A widely accepted definition of family does not exist. Multiple definitions have been proposed across disciplines – including social sciences, law, medicine – and the common characteristics across these definitions include notions of kinship, intimacy, and economic cooperation. Underlying these characteristics is the notion that the family has "both a history and a future" (Noble et al. 1994, 534); that is, the group is not temporary in nature. In addition, the notions of extended family and alternative family are central to our understanding of the family group by including more distant kinship ties, single parents, re-married parents, same-sex parents, etc., within the definition of family. In keeping with the recent developments in CCT research, I adopt the broad definition of family proposed by DeVault (1991, 54): a family is a "socially constructed group, continually brought into being through the activities of individuals." The important part of this definition is that a family is not simply a group of people. DeVault contends that a family exists as a family as a result of *performances* by its members. Members' behaviours and communications – in their varying forms – across and between one another are what constitute family. In other words, family requires "doing," in the form of

7

enacting and performing, rather than merely "being," in the form of blood or marriage ties (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). This is important for CCT researchers, because it involves the notion that consumption behavior plays a critical role in how family is performed.

Families are collective enterprises, and they play pivotal roles in everyday life, consumption experiences, and the identity practices of individuals (Epp and Price 2008). They are continually engaged in activities of consumption and production (Ekstrom 2004), and sustain their own realities and identities through these repeated activities, routines, and rituals (DeVault 1991). Routine acts of care-giving, such as feeding, can sustain the family by providing physical sustenance, emotional connection, and affirmation of family relationships (DeVault 1991; Moisio, Arnould, and Price 2004). Indeed, providing care and enacting intimacy, in their various forms, constitute the performance of family by maintaining social roles and relationships, particularly when the care is directed to very young, very old, or ill family members (Brody 2004).

Exchanging care and intimacy within the family can be conceptualized as a form of sharing, in which care and intimacy are given and performed in a non-reciprocal exchange for the purpose of nurturing and sustaining close social relationships with other family members (Belk 2010; Belk and Coon 1993). Although caring for and caring about each other are fundamental aspects of family life, the ebb and flow of love and care among family members is not always balanced or smooth (Ekstrom 2004). Caring is often viewed as women's work, and it has long been argued that women are oppressed because they provide care that may entail subservience to men (DeVault 1991). Indeed, there is no shortage of empirical accounts of the predominant role of women in providing

care to children, elderly family members, and other frail or less-able family members (Brody 2004; Collins 2009; Hochschild 1989; Schor 1992). These gendered differences in caregiving can give rise to ambivalence, as individual family members attempt to balance their own actions and the normative constraints imposed by social structure (Connidis and McMullin 2002; Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1990); indeed, for many women with dependent children or elderly parents, "private moments of confusion or conflict about care are often directly linked to contradictory social pressures in society at large," (Hochschild 2003, 3).

Family is also performed by engaging in the marketplace (Epp and Price 2008). A growing stream of consumer research has explored family consumption experiences, such as how parents make difficult healthcare decisions for their children (Botti, Orfali, and Iyengar 2009), how family members influence and are influenced by each other (Cotte and Wood 2004; Grønhøj 2006), the ways in which families produce and consume (Moisio et al. 2004), and the role of family structure in consumption practices (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton 1997; Roberts, Manolis, and Tanner 2003). Further, consumption patterns evolve as the family moves through its life cycle; the roles and relationships between family members shift, and the nature of family life itself changes, with drastic impacts on consumption and household expenditure (Douthitt and Fedyk 1990; Wilkes 1995). Throughout the life cycle, families perform socialization functions by enabling children to develop their own abilities as consumers (e.g., understand persuasion attempts, develop decision-making skills) (John 1999). Intra-familial communication and consumption behaviours play key roles in socializing young family members, and the nature of the family's communication style can influence the ways that

younger generations engage with the marketplace (Carlson, Grossbart, and Stuenkel 1992; Moschis 1985). Marketplace interactions and consumption also play an important role at the end of the family life cycle by functioning as a form of social support for elderly individuals (Kang and Ridgway 1996; Schau, Gilly, and Wolfinbarger 2009). In short, families' engagement with the marketplace plays a dominant role in everyday life and in the ways that family is performed.

Recent research has addressed the importance of understanding how family identity is managed through consumption behaviour (Epp and Price 2008). Family identity – the family's subjective sense of self – is co-constructed in interactions between individual members, relational groups, and consumption practices, and it influences consumption behaviours (Epp and Price 2008). Identity is maintained through routines, practices, and rituals (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), and is intertwined with special family objects (Epp and Price 2010). Thus, the field of consumer research, and CCT in particular, has begun to re-orient consumption research from an individual focus to a family focus, and to examine consumption phenomena relevant to everyday families.

Consumers and the Marketplace for Care & Intimacy

The consumption of care services from the market remains largely unexplored in consumer research, and our understanding of family consumption can be improved by studying how consumers choose and use these services from the marketplace. In this thesis, I reveal the nature of the experience of turning to the marketplace to pay for care or intimacy, and, in doing so, show how individuals interact with the marketplace when they attempt to perform family (Epp and Price 2008). I have demonstrated that care and

intimacy are integral parts of "doing" family, and I now develop the notion that care and intimacy procured from the marketplace is vastly different from the care and intimacy that is produced within the family.

The meaning embedded in a consumption phenomenon can change as the context changes, particularly if this involves a shift from a traditional context to a more unconventional context. For example, Cotte and Latour (2009) found that the meaning of gambling changes as it moves from a casino to an in-home, on-line context, and they were able to challenge the assumption that the activity itself remains constant in both environments. Further, recent consumer research has shown that, in contrast to prior assumptions, consumers do not always know how to make consumption choices to facilitate major life transitions. In times of family transition, such as addition of a new baby or an elderly parent requiring daily care, consumption of goods and services can, in fact, complicate role and identity transitions (The VOICE Group 2010). Families must negotiate the aspects of care-giving and intimacy that they can produce internally and those they can purchase from the marketplace, in a process that is rife with internal conflict and normative pressures from society (Hochschild 2003; Hogg, Curasi, and Maclaran 2004). These pressures are prevalent across all contexts in this research: the purchase of childcare, elder care, and romance-infused sex. Western culture has problematized each of these to some degree, with the result that consumers of childcare, elder care, and/or commercial sex have consumption experiences that are influenced and shaped by social and cultural factors (Brody 2004; Hays 1996; Weitzer 2009). Further, the economic transactions involved in consumption of marketplace services can fundamentally change the nature of the act of caring/intimacy by blurring the boundaries

between economic and personal spheres of life (Zelizer 2005). Thus, questions remain about how consumers experience using commercial care or intimacy.

In the following sub-sections, I give brief accounts of the literature relevant to each essay, argue for the need for this research, and articulate the specific research questions. Literature pertaining to these research questions is reviewed more thoroughly in their respective chapters.

Essay #1: Outsourcing Childcare

The first essay is a study of childcare consumption by mothers who return to the workforce after a maternity leave. Prior research has demonstrated that childcare consumption can put considerable stress on working families, and in particular on the mothers because they do the majority of the juggling of work and family schedules (Haley, Perry-Jenkins, and Armenia 2001; Hochschild 2001; Huff and Cotte 2010). Women and men both feel pressure to meet their family responsibilities, but working mothers often find themselves under considerable pressure to be exceptional in their parental and professional roles (Ehrensaft 2001; Hays 1996), whereas conventional approaches to fatherhood view economic support and moral leadership as the most important contributions that men can make to their families (Coltrane and Adams 2001). Mothers using childcare services need to negotiate the integration of commercial care into their own care-giving, which has implications for the performance of motherhood (Huff and Cotte 2013). Therefore, the research questions guiding the first essay are: what difficulties emerge from the different roles mothers play, and the tensions between their expectations and their experiences? And, how can consumers reconstruct what was an unpleasant and constrained decision process into a free choice process after the fact?

These questions are addressed in Chapter 2, where I reveal that the consumption of commercial childcare for one's infant is intensely personal and different from other, more conventional consumption in many ways. In this essay, I deeply examine the constraints and challenges of childcare consumption for mothers. In doing so, I characterize the complexities in relation to the difficulty of the choice itself and also to ongoing consumption. Using depth interviews with mothers who have recently chosen childcare services, I identify four dimensions of complexity in this unique consumption context: maternal role, role conflict, experienced stress, and guilt. I build on prior research on choice and post-choice outcomes to demonstrate that examining these consumption stages as discrete events can hinder our understanding of how consumers experience and behave in the wider consumption process. I also account for our informants' satisfaction with choice outcomes that are often not reflective of preference, and conclude by addressing implications for consumer well-being and public policy.

Essay #2: Outsourcing Elder Care

Second, I present a study of elder care consumption by families whose elderly parents require some degree of care-giving. Decisions to purchase elder care from the marketplace rather than provide it internally can cause strife within families and stress for individuals. Indeed, "more elective family enactments must be championed and managed" (Epp and Price 2008, 57), and the complications are compounded in the case of elder care, where – often – decision-making control does not reside fully with the adult child or the parent (Brody 2004). Surrogate decision makers face a different set of challenges than individuals making decisions for themselves (Raymark 2000), and the

context of elder care is especially complex because a host of care services are likely to be required as aging or illness progress (Huff and Cotte 2011, 2012; Penrod and Dellasga 1998). Further, family performances become complicated at this late stage of the family life cycle, when members live in different households (Wilkes 1995). As a result, many adult children find the experience of making elder care decisions traumatic, stressful, and riddled with guilt (Dellasega and Mastrian 1995). The research questions guiding the second essay are: how do families experience the elderly generation's need for daily care? What is the role of consumption at this stage of the family life cycle? And, how is family identity enacted beyond the boundaries of the household? These questions are addressed in Chapter 3.

Drawing on depth interviews with multiple family members, I examine the role of consumption in family identity enactments during the late stage of the family life cycle, which involves an elderly parent(s) requiring some degree of daily care. I theorize the relationships between consumption, family identity, and family life cycle, and in doing so expand on current literature on family consumption. First, I reveal that the marketplace (i.e., commercial elder care services) is used instrumentally to perform family. Prior research has suggested that marketplace resources are used symbolically (Epp and Price 2008), but I demonstrate that they can be used as a legitimate way to provide requisite care to an elderly parent while also maintaining independent living arrangements for the parent and adult children. Second, I reveal that everyday consumption, however minor in scale or scope, not only plays an important role in identity maintenance for the elderly but also plays an even more critical role for adult children, who see shopping and leisure activities as ways to ensure continuity of family identity and symbolic markers of their

parent(s)'s independence. Third, I expose the ways in which time consumption is altered in this stage of family life cycle to preserve family identity; family time is renegotiated to prioritize social visits with elderly parents, time for managing care services, and time for negotiating with siblings on issues surrounding parental care. Together, these developments indicate that at this stage of family life cycle family identity enactments are fundamentally dependent on the marketplace, both in the form of care services and everyday shopping, and that intra-familial social interactions are prioritized.

Essay #3: Outsourcing Sex & Intimacy

In the last essay, I consider sexual intimacy as a form of intimacy that is typically provided between spouses/partners, and I present a study of men who choose to purchase sex from the marketplace. There is a paucity of literature on consumers of prostitutes, particularly on consumers of indoor prostitutes (i.e., call-girls, escort workers) (Weitzer 2009). Further, the majority of sex work research has focused on street prostitution (e.g., Monto and Julka 2009), and a better understanding of indoor prostitution is needed (Weitzer 2005). In this research, I seek to address this gap in the literature by examining men's experiences with indoor prostitution services. In doing so, I also expand our understanding of consumer behaviour by studying a risky and socially deviant form of consumption (Belk, Østergaard, and Groves 1998; see also Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). Consumption of indoor prostitution is relevant to this thesis because it generally involves more affection, time, and reciprocal pleasure than street prostitution (Weitzer 2009). It is, therefore, a consumption phenomenon involving the pursuit of aspects of an intimate relationship in a commercial context (Milrod and Weitzer 2012; Sanders 2008;

15

Zelizer 2005). The research question guiding this essay is simply: what are consumers'

experiences in this context? This is addressed in chapter 4, where I use a combination of

netnography and interviews to explore the experiences of male customers of escorts who

provide a sexual service known as the "girlfriend experience," or GFE (Huff 2011, 111-

112): I find that, unlike most customer-prostitute encounters, the GFE involves more than

the exchange of money for sex; to derive the full value of the experience, the consumer

must not only pay the escort but must also provide her with sexual pleasure and

emotional intimacy. The resulting encounter is more romantic and intimate than purely

sexual in nature. Findings are organized around three central themes: consumption of

covert (i.e., secretive) pleasure, consumer fantasies, and the ways in which consumers

cocreate value in the consumption experience. This essay explores how consumers

engage in a form of consumption that has been largely overlooked by consumer

researchers, and how consumers experience the blurring of boundaries between purely

transactional service encounters and those that entail a deeper connection between

provider and consumer. In addition to shedding light on this consumption context in the

form of description, this research illuminates some aspects of GFE consumption that are

theoretically interesting (beyond the context itself) to consumer researchers.

METHOD

To address the research questions outlined in the previous sections, I employ an

inductive approach that has been referred to in conventional consumer research as

interpretive or qualitative. Because all research involves interpretation, and qualitative

data can be used in multiple paradigms (Arnould and Thompson 2007), I use this section

to fully illustrate the method and to articulate the underlying methodological and epistemological assumptions. The discussion presented here is pertinent to each essay.

First, it is necessary to note my use of terminology. I understand *method* to refer to the actual techniques used to gather, analyze, and interpret data. In this research, the methods are depth interviews, which are used to collect qualitative data in the form of interview transcripts, and netnography, which is used to collect online postings from Internet discussion forums (Kozinets 2010). Examples of other methods for collecting qualitative data include ethnography (e.g., Schouten and McAlexander 1995) or participant observation (e.g., Goulding et al. 2009). The methods of data analysis and interpretation will include categorization, abstraction, comparison, and iteration (Spiggle 1994). These methods are guided by the *methodologies*, which are sets of assumptions about valid ways of knowing (Guba and Lincoln 1998). The methodologies applied in this research include phenomenology and hermeneutics, which will be used to understand how individuals' consumption experiences are grounded in culture (Thompson and Hirschman 1995). These are oriented by the underlying *epistemology*, which is a set of assumptions about what can be known, and the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon. In contrast with experimental consumer research, for example, I assume that knowledge can be created by interacting with informants in order to understand how they experience and derive meaning from the phenomena in question. To this end, my epistemological orientation may be classified as subjectivist or transactional, in that the researcher and informant are linked (Guba and Lincoln 1998). I reserve the term *qualitative* as a linguistic modifier for a type of data, and I use the term *interpretive* to refer to research of a phenomenological or hermeneutic orientation – such as this thesis.

17

In the following sections, I discuss the methodological assumptions in this inquiry, present the research design, describe how data analysis will be conducted, and discuss criteria for evaluation.

Interpretive Inquiry in Consumer Research

Interpretive inquiry can serve as a legitimate platform for executing research in human settings by generating deep understanding of phenomena as they exist in their natural contexts (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). Interpretive research embraces the relationship between researcher and informant, and the subjectivities of both parties (Moustakas 1994; Tolman and Brydon-Miller 2001) such that knowledge is created from the lived experience and interpretation of the researcher and the informant (Hirschman 1986; Tadajewski 2006). Consumer researchers can, therefore, use interpretive approaches to convey the vibrant and rich nature of consumption phenomena (Goulding 2003) by giving credence to the informant's tacit knowledge and attending to nuances of consumption experiences (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In the next two sub-sections, I discuss the methodologies associated with phenomenology and hermeneutics, and describe how the assumptions underlying these ways of knowing guide the methods (i.e., data collection, analysis, and interpretation).

Phenomenology

As a methodology, phenomenology is concerned with understanding human experience by capturing the individual and shared meanings of phenomena (Patton 2002). Phenomena serve as the foundation for knowledge of human behaviour (Moustakas

1994), and in consumer research, phenomena are usually factors of human life (Hirschman 1986). A phenomenological approach allows for the exploration of consumer experience as a "meaningful human situation," not a "problem in need of solution" (Thompson et al. 1990, 346). Phenomenological research does not separate the individual from the environment. Rather, it offers a description of experience as it is lived and embedded in a context (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). Consumer behaviour is assumed to be experiential and meaning-based, as opposed to behavioural response to external stimuli (Hackley 2003), and is therefore appropriate for phenomenological study (Goulding 1999). In spite of fundamental differences from experimental consumer research, phenomenological research is considered empirical because evidence (i.e., textual data in the form of interview transcripts) is used to support the researcher's interpretation of the lived experience (Thompson et al. 1989). Thus, the narratives provided by informants make up the body of evidence that permit phenomenology to be classified as empirical (Churchill and Wertz 1985).

The goal of phenomenology is to produce a rich, first-person description of how the phenomenon is experienced (Thompson et al. 1989) and to explore the meaning of the phenomenon (Hitzler and Eberle 2004). Since it proceeds empirically from the researcher's own experiences, a phenomenology often begins with a topic that is personally meaningful to the researcher (Creswell 2003). The researcher typically conducts a small number of depth interviews and then analyzes the transcribed interview data with the intent of capturing the essence of the informants' experiences (Berg 2007). The research design, then, allows for the description of essence in informants' experiences to be communicated in a way that allows readers to gain a deeper

understanding of how the phenomenon creates meaning for the informants (Leedy 1997). The interview transcripts are analyzed for themes and patterns that exemplify how the phenomenon is experienced (Hackley 2003).There is no assumption that the researcher understands the phenomenon prior to investigation. A priori hypotheses or fully specified data collection and analysis plans are not possible (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Bogdan and Taylor 1975) because the researcher's objective is to describe lived experience, not to test hypotheses (Thompson et al. 1989).

Thompson et al. outline three central concepts of an existential-phenomenological approach in their description of the consumption experiences of contemporary wives. These concepts include intentionality, emergent dialogue, and a hermeneutic endeavor (Thompson et al. 1990). Intentionality refers to the idea that consciousness (or experience) and the object of consciousness (or the object of experience) are intentionally intertwined, therefore the informant's experiential and subjective narrative serves as the foundation for understanding (Moustakas 1994; Thompson et al. 1990). Emergent dialogue refers to the researcher's attempts to grasp emergent meanings, rather than to impose theoretical meanings on the dialogue (Thompson et al. 1989). This is achieved by allowing the informant to set the course of the interview rather than guiding the informant through a structured or semi-structured set of questions (Goulding 1999). A hermeneutic circle involves the process of interpretation, and this will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Hermeneutics

While phenomenological research reveals the personal meanings associated with a particular phenomenon, it overlooks the social and cultural forces that frame consumer experience (Thompson 1996). In regard to an exploration of the research questions in this thesis, it is likely that ignoring cultural influences would impede our understanding of the phenomena. A hermeneutic approach offers a solution by necessitating an account of cultural circumstances while maintaining a focus on the informant's lived experience (Thompson et al. 1990). It requires textual data to be interpreted such that the relationships between described experience and underlying meaning are understood in the appropriate socio-historic context (Moustakas 1994).

Consumer researchers have developed a hermeneutic methodology based on principles of the underlying philosophy. The features of this methodology include assumptions about the nature and autonomy of the text; semiotic or structural approaches to interpretation of the text; the use of hermeneutic circling, which involves tacking between individual elements of the text and the text as a whole; the fusion of horizons; and critical assessment of interpretation (Arnold and Fischer 1994). The use of these features will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter. The important thing to note is that the researcher looks for relationships and linkages between literature and textual data, and the quality of the findings is dependent on the structure of these links (Thompson 1997). The researcher strives to reveal the meaningful intention and significance of textual data in light of the relevant social context (Moustakas 1994) such that respondents' self-interpretations reflect the broad, underlying cultural influences (Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994).

Historically, phenomenological research has not been characterized by the use of hermeneutic interpretations (Thompson 1996). However, the textual data gathered from phenomenological interviews are "particularly well suited to hermeneutic analysis" (Thompson 1997, 442). For example, in his research on the consumption meanings experienced by working mothers, Thompson linked informants' descriptions to the underlying cultural meanings, and found that "consumption was squarely situated within this nexus of personal and cultural meanings, and its symbolic meanings frequently paralleled the informants' self-perceptions" (Thompson 1996, 403). He adopted a hermeneutic approach in order to understand the ways in which informants cultivate a coherent identity, while attending to the conditions in which informants were socialized. Thus, a hermeneutic interpretation allows for the integration of personal and culturally shared meanings (Thompson 1997).

In sum, phenomenological methodology is appropriate for examining a concept or phenomenon that is context dependent and embedded in the subjective consciousness of individuals (Hitzler and Eberle 2004), and a hermeneutic methodology allows for the consideration of social meanings and context (Thompson et al. 1994). In this way, these two methodological orientations, in combination, allow for a meaningful understanding of how individuals experience consumption of care and intimacy in Western culture.

Research Design

The elements of a conventional (i.e., experimental or survey) research design can be clearly specified and delineated prior to embarking on data collection. Interpretive inquiry, meanwhile, has a more fluid design; the researcher must be creative and adaptive

through the research process, giving thoughtful and continuous attention to developments

and flows related to all aspects of research design (Erlandson et al. 1993). The purpose of

the following subsections is to orient the reader to my approach to research design.

Where necessary, I provide details on the data sets in the three studies.

Sampling

Phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches generally involve a small sample

size that can be as small as one informant but typically involves more (Leedy 1997). The

sampling approach is usually purposeful, meaning that the researcher chooses individuals

who are likely to offer the most useful information in terms of quality and quantity (Belk,

Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988; Patton 1990) and therefore will be most helpful in

addressing the purpose of the study (Erlandson et al. 1993). Accordingly, I have recruited

individuals who are able to openly reflect on the consumption phenomena relevant to

each essay. Fournier (1998, 347) used a similar sampling method for her in-depth

interviews exploring women's relationships with branded products, noting "informants

were purposively selected to maximize chances of uncovering insight on important brand

relationship phenomena" (see also Fischer et al. 2007). Because generalization of results

to a broader population is not an objective of this research, random sampling and large

sample sizes are not necessary or desired (Erlandson et al. 1993). Instead, the purpose of

sampling is to maximize meaningful information (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

In the first two studies, informants were recruited through social networks and

casual acquaintances, and these individuals were asked to pass information about the

study to friends who might be able to participate. Essay 1 includes data from 15

informants, and essay 2 includes data from 24 informants, with the result that both studies

23

have sample sizes that meet the minimum number suggested by McCracken (1988) for developing cultural categories and themes. Although some consumer research has used sample sizes of less than ten informants when relying on interview data (e.g., Fournier 1998; Schouten 1991; Thompson 1996), more recent research has used samples in the range of 20 (e.g., Allen 2002; Fischer et al. 2007; Moisio et al. 2004) and some authors have conducted as many as 65 interviews (e.g., Schau et al. 2009). In the third study, I used online ads to recruit participants, but relied primarily on publically available, online data. The final data set includes contributions from 53 unique individuals.

In sampling for this type of research, the nature and quality of the data are more important than the number of informants. In each study, I engaged in a form of purposive sampling called theoretical sampling (Coyne 1997). This approach to sampling involves "seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory;" I sampled to develop the theoretical categories that emerged in the early stages of data analysis, and continued until I reached a point of saturation for the categories of interest (Charmaz 2006, 96). This approach to sampling is well suited for inductive research, because the goal is to direct and develop initial conceptualizations until no new insights emerge. Thus, throughout the research process of each study, additional sampling was directed by the categories that emerged from initial data collection, such that tentative theoretical developments were challenged and refined (Charmaz 2006). Data collection ceased when categories were deemed to be sufficiently explored and elaborated, and the relationships between them were understood (Coyne 1997).

Data Collection

In the first two essays, unstructured depth interviews were used to allow informants to freely share their experiences and broach relevant themes using an interactive and informal format (Moustakas 1994). Probing questions were used to examine shared themes that emerge through the data collection phase (Schouten 1991). In their detailed and practical account of phenomenological interviews, Thompson et al. (1989) stress that the interviewer's responsibility is to create a context for informants to speak comfortably and in detail about their experiences. If this is done effectively, informants should require minimal prompting or interference in order to participate meaningfully (Myers 1985). The opening question is critical to the flow of the dialogue, and I took care to ensure they were open-ended and had an experiential focus (McCracken 1988; Willig 2007). It was also important to quickly establish a good rapport with informants so that they felt comfortable sharing their experiences with choosing care. This allowed informants to be open, frank, and sincere as they divulged details about their consumption experiences (Schouten 1991).

In this type of research, it is imperative to avoid the use of the question "why" in the interview (Thompson et al. 1989). "Why?" questions can prompt respondents to justify past behaviour or commentary with seemingly rational reasons, and this can halt the flow of described experience. Better alternatives include prompts and questions like "tell me more about…" or "what was that like?" Asking good questions results in better, richer data and can result in more useful and insightful interpretations (Erlandson et al. 1993). As I developed an initial understanding of the phenomena, I moved from more

open-ended interviews to a moderately more structured format in order to fully develop the emerging theoretical categories (Belk et al. 1988).

In the third essay, I relied primarily on a method called netnography, which is a form of Internet-based ethnography (Kozinets 2010). In employing this method, I collected data from online discussion forums, where multiple consumers shared their stories and conversed with one another about their consumption of GFE. These data were supported by two online interviews (i.e., conducted via Google Chat) with one informant, wherein I was able to clarify and develop my understanding of the categories that emerged through analysis of the netnographic data. Chapter 4 contains a detailed description of my observational (i.e., non-participatory) netnographic approach.

Data Collection & Maintenance

For the first two essays, all interviews were audiotaped, and transcribed verbatim. I created detailed field notes immediately after each interview, taking care to note aspects of the interview that were not captured in the transcript. Each of these studies involved data collection lasting more than three years. Study one yielded 328 pages of single-spaced, typed data, including transcripts and field notes. Study two yielded 801 pages of single-spaced, typed data, including transcripts and field notes.

For the third essay, I cataloged each posting of online data, and recorded the text from the online interview. Data collection for this study was conducted over a period of three months. Study three yielded 41 pages of single-spaced, typed data, including catalogued postings and the interview transcripts. The netnographic data included 55

postings from 52 unique informants. The length of the catalogued postings ranged from 29 words to 1,396 words, with a mean average of 262 words.

I maintained a research journal for each study wherein notes, reflections, memos, and emergent categories were explored. Data analysis was conducted primarily by hand: I used highlighters, a pencil, and hard copies of the data to identify emergent categories, properties, and insights in the data. Additionally, NVIVO 9 software was used to examine the data from phase 2 of the second study, which involved interview with multiple members (i.e., two or more adult children, and an elderly parent) of multiple families. The software enabled me to deeply examine the emergent categories within families and across families, as well as within generations and across generations.

Ethical Considerations

The research questions in this proposal are related to consumption phenomena that are, likely, highly personal to informants. Therefore, ethical considerations become paramount in this research, because informants are asked to speak about sensitive issues. Erlandson et al. (1993) recommend attention to ethical considerations involving disclosure of the researcher's goals and the purpose of the study, protection of informant confidentiality, establishing which parties have control over the final study results, and sensitivity to the informant's role as a co-researcher. Specifically, they draw attention to concerns over informant harm, privacy and confidentiality, deception, and informed consent. Moustakas (1994) articulates similar concerns over informants' volunteer status, their freedom to withdraw, and maintaining confidentiality.

These issues (among others) are addressed in the information letter, which was provided to informants in studies 1 and 2 during initial contact (e.g., via email, after the informant expressed interest in participating) and again immediately prior to the interview. I obtained signed consent to participate and to audiotape the interview. Informants were assured that their participation was entirely confidential, and I provided them with my contact information in the event that they had concerns after the interview. Prior to the interview, informants were also explicitly informed that they may terminate the interview at any time. In study 3, the informant was assured of anonymity; I clearly stated that I did not wish him to share any information that would enable me (or anyone else) to identify him, and that I would not contact him again after the interview.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

The data take the form of text, which is generated by transcribing the interviews. Analysis of this text is "not an inclusive, discrete phase" (Belk et al. 1988, 455), but an art (Denzin 2004), and preliminary analysis frequently occurs during the data collection phase (Schouten 1991). Spiggle (1994) advocates a systematic approach to analysis of qualitative data, and stresses the importance of keeping meticulous records throughout the research process. In the following sub-sections, I describe the approaches for phenomenological and hermeneutic interpretation, however I do not wish to imply that each study involved two separate interpretations of the data. Rather, it involved interpretation through two complementary processes. First, I interpreted data following the guidelines for phenomenology, and aimed to develop a rich understanding of informants' experiences. Second, I built on this phenomenological interpretation using

the hermeneutic framework to create an understanding of the consumption experience as it is embedded in broader cultural meanings (Thompson 1997). The resulting interpretation is not the product of two discrete phases, but rather evolves over the course of the research as themes emerge, contradictions are addressed, and interpretation is refined (Schouten 1991). In the final sub-section, I describe how relevant cultural elements are developed and woven into the interpretation.

Phenomenological Interpretation

In phenomenology, the goal is to develop an interpretation that permits an understanding of the lived meaning of consumer experiences (Willig 2007). Significant statements and *meaning units* – "the smallest segments of text that are meaningful by themselves" (Creswell 2003) – are the focus of data analysis (Moustakas 1994). Analysis of transcribed data is more open and intuitive in phenomenology than other forms of qualitative data analysis (Tesch 1994), and involves a focus on negotiated meanings and interpretation (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In this way, interpretation is a thick description of the phenomenon that functions as a translation (Hirschman 1986) to reveal what was hidden or unsaid (Moustakas 1994).

Thompson et al. (1989) identify three interpretive criteria in phenomenological research. First, an emic approach must be adopted, whereby the experience is described in the terms used by the informants as opposed to the conceptual language of the researcher. Second, the researcher must acknowledge the autonomy of the text. Informants' descriptions of their lived experiences are not subsequently verified, because descriptions are accepted as the informants' true reconstructions of the experiences.

Additionally, interpretation must not include hypotheses or suppositions that cannot be directly supported by the text. Consistent with the need for an emic approach, the researcher should avoid discussing the text using theoretical abstractions.

Third, a priori conjectures related to the phenomena need to be bracketed, meaning that the researcher must recognize and hold back theoretical conjectures when describing informants' experiences (Churchill and Wertz 1985). The use of bracketing is akin to working from scratch, and is therefore in opposition to the approach used by the positivist researcher, who intentionally interprets data in relation to a priori hypotheses (Durgee 1987). Thompson et al. suggest that bracketing can be accomplished by involving a group of researchers in the interpretation process. The "interpretive group" members review the lead researcher's interpretations and compare these against the original transcripts. The purpose of the group is to ensure that themes arising from the text are not described in abstract, theoretical terms, and to ensure that the contextual significance of each meaning unit and significant statement is maintained.

Hermeneutic Interpretation

Hermeneutic interpretation is concerned with fusing the horizons of the researcher and the text, which involves transcending the subject-object dichotomy such that the researcher's pre-understanding comes to be aligned with the text (Arnold and Fischer 1994). A circle is a way of conceptualizing the nature of hermeneutic understanding and the fusion of horizons, and CCT researchers have developed three meanings of this circle (Thompson et al. 1994). First, and most important, the circle refers to the process of weaving together informants' understandings of their own lived experiences and the

underlying social and cultural meanings (Thompson et al. 1994). In this sense, the circular interpretive process recognizes that personal experiences are intertwined and embedded in social and historic context, and the researcher seeks to emphasize cultural meanings and circumstances in individual consumption experience (Thompson et al. 1990; Thompson et al. 1994).

Second, the hermeneutic circle symbolizes the nature and importance of the researcher's preconceptions in the interpretation process. Because the researcher, the informant, and the phenomenon are fundamentally intertwined, the interpretation is unavoidably based on the researcher's own preconceptions (Tappan 2001). While this poses a problem in experimental research, it is a necessary element of interpretive research. The researcher's initial assumptions about the phenomena serve as a preliminary frame of reference for understanding the text (Thompson et al. 1994). The circular interpretation process then allows the researcher to correct prejudgments and assumptions in light of the textual data, which then leads to new prejudgments and assumptions in a progression that is perpetually iterative (Thompson 1997); the researcher responds to the text by continuously revising his understanding with the objective of developing an interpretation that is coherent and free of contradictions (Arnold and Fischer 1994).

The third meaning of the circle is related to the interpretive process itself, where the focus shifts back and forth from part of the text to whole text (Thompson 1997). In her phenomenological analysis of special possessions, Myers (1985, 561) notes that the process of data analysis involved "[a] circular and painstaking process requiring continuing revision, checking back and attention to the exact descriptions given by each

participant." Thus, the researcher strives to understand how experiential situations are organized for each informant and to determine if there are similar patterns for other informants (Thompson et al. 1990). This can be accomplished in a two-stage process (e.g., Cotte, Ratneshwar, and Mick 2004; Willig 2007). First, each transcript/posting is read, analyzed, and the corresponding emic findings are organized individually. Next, general themes are identified at the etic level, such that an account of global themes and understanding is possible. To achieve this, the researcher must be able to demonstrate that individual transcripts/postings provide direct support for the broad, emergent themes (Thompson et al. 1989).

Cultural Elements

In each essay, it was necessary to understand the cultural elements in which informants' narratives are grounded. Extant consumer research tends to present in-depth discussions of cultural elements deemed by the researcher to be integral to the lived experiences of informants in relation to the consumption phenomenon of interest. These cultural elements can take the form of aspects of social structure (i.e., class- or gender-based patterns of inequality in society) (Fischer and Arnold 1990; Thompson and Tambyah 1999), tacit ideologies or world-views (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Kozinets 2008; Thompson and Haytko 1997), or sociocultural discourses (Belk and Zhao 2008; Fischer et al. 2007; Moisander 2006; Thompson and Hirschman 1995; Thompson and Tian 2007). Much of this work links more specific discourses with underlying ideological orientations to reveal how culture shapes everyday consumer experiences (Bonsu 2009; Holt and Thompson 2004). For example, Fischer et al. (2007) demonstrate

that women's experiences pursuing biological parenthood – a dominant cultural ideology – are infused with references to four specific discourses (pronatalism, genetic essentialism, fecundity, and maternity/paternity), and these discourses shape their individual experiences with artificial reproductive technology. The authors discuss these discourses prior to presenting their interpretations of the data, thereby providing the reader with the necessary background to follow the theoretical development. Following the examples of prior work, I have sought to attend to cultural elements related to the research questions.

Evaluation of Results

Phenomenology should move beyond summaries of informants' narratives and should describe the broad meanings of informants' experiences (Willig 2007); "the essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description re-awakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller and deeper manner" (Van Manen 1990, 10). In keeping with a hermeneutic approach, it is also important to reveal how these personal meanings are embedded in the contemporary socio-historic context, such that the results emphasize personal and socially constructed realities (Denzin 2004).

Due to the nature of the data interpretation in an interpretive inquiry and the assumptions of the underlying research paradigm, validity and reliability cannot be assessed in the same way that conventional research necessitates. Valid inquiry of any nature must allow the intended audience to critically evaluate the research process and findings, and it must convey some measure of trustworthiness (Erlandson et al. 1993). In

place of assessing validity and reliability from a positivist perspective, Guba and Lincoln

(1998) propose four different criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness qualitative

research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. I have attempted

to maximize each of these qualities in the design, execution, and presentation of this

research.

Credibility is the degree to which the results are believable to the informants who

informed the research, and it addresses the soundness of methods used to ensure

confidence in the findings (Guba and Lincoln 1998). Credibility encompasses the degree

of engagement and observation of informants, and the steps taken to ensure that the

interpretation has merit (e.g., triangulation, peer debriefing) (Erlandson et al. 1993). The

second criterion, *transferability*, is the ability of the findings to be generalized or

transferred to other contexts (Guba and Lincoln 1998). The purpose of a

phenomenological approach is not to generalize but to provide a thorough and deep

description that could be generalized by a reader who wishes to apply the results to other

informants or contexts (Erlandson et al. 1993). I have sought to provide sufficient detail

such that others may transfer my results to other settings if they so desire. *Dependability*,

the third criterion, is essentially a measure of consistency (Erlandson et al. 1993), and

achieving dependable results requires adequate consideration of how the context affects

the research. I have examined the details of the interview settings and considered how

changes in the settings may have impacted my results. Examination of an audit trail of the

research process can be useful in improving dependability of results, and I maintained

detailed records to document the inquiry process, from beginning to end of each study.

Confirmability is achieved when the interpretation of results can be corroborated by

others because the findings are not embedded in the researcher's biases (Erlandson et al. 1993). I have aimed to present confirmable results by clearly documenting and reporting on how the data are analyzed, and, perhaps, by involving my supervisor in the interpretation stages to question and challenge my interpretations (Thompson et al. 1989).

The criteria presented above are necessary but not sufficient markers of good interpretive research. As is the case with experimental consumer research, innovation, usefulness, and practical applicability of results are also benchmarks of quality (Spiggle 1994). Other hallmarks of rigorous interpretive consumer research are careful documentation of the data collection and interpretation process, development of interesting insights that can be linked to existing theoretical conversations, and careful selection of context. Further, interpretive researchers should not study contexts in and of themselves, but should strive to illuminate interesting consumption phenomena and make theoretical contributions using the context (Arnould, Price, and Moisio 2006; Arnould and Thompson 2005b). To this end, I have sought feedback from the CCT community at many points throughout the development of this thesis by presenting early stages of the work at conferences, attending qualitative data workshops, and participating in theory-development seminars.

In sum, I have sought to produce research in which both the results and the process for arriving at those results are consistent with standards of rigour and trustworthiness in CCT research. In the following chapters, I present the three studies. The final chapter summarizes the unique contributions of each study, reviews the collective contribution of the body of work, and develops directions for future research.

REFERENCES

Allen, Douglas E. (2002), "Toward a Theory of Consumer Choice as Sociohistorically Shaped Practical Experience: The Fits-Like-a-Glove (Flag) Framework," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (March), 515-32.

Arnold, Stephen J. and Eileen Fischer (1994), "Hermeneutics and Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (June), 55-70.

Arnould, Eric J. and Craig Thompson (2005a), "Twenty Years of Consumer Culture Theory: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 32, ed. Geeta Menon and Akshay R. Rao, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 129-30.

Arnould, Eric J. and Craig J. Thompson (2005b), "Consumer Culture Theory (Cct): Twenty Years of Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (March), 868-82.

Arnould, Eric, Linda Price, and Risto Moisio (2006), "Making Contexts Matter: Selecting Research Contexts for Theoretical Insights," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing*, ed. Russell W. Belk, Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 106-25.

Arnould, Eric and Craig J. Thompson (2007), "Consumer Culture Theory (and We Really Mean Theoretics): Dilemmas and Opportunities Posed by an Academic Branding Strategy," in *Consumer Culture Theory*, ed. Russell W. Belk, San Diego, CA: Elsevier.

Belk, Russell (2010), "Sharing," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (5), 715-34.

Belk, Russell, Per Østergaard, and Ronald Groves (1998), "Sexual Consumption in the Time of Aids: A Study of Prostitute Patronage in Thailand," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 17 (4), 197-214.

Belk, Russell W. and Gregory S. Coon (1993), "Gift Giving as Agapic Love: An Alternative to the Exchange Paradigm Based on Dating Experiences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (December), 393-417.

Belk, Russell W., Güliz Ger, and Soren Askegaard (2003), "The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30 (December), 326-51.

Belk, Russell W., John F. Sherry, and Melanie Wallendorf (1988), "A Naturalistic Inquiry into Buyer and Seller Behavior at a Swap Meet," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (March), 449-70.

Belk, Russell W., Melanie Wallendorf, and John F. Sherry (1989), "The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behavior: Theodicy on the Odyssey," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (June), 1-38.

Belk, Russell W. and Xin Zhao (2008), "Politicizing Consumer Culture: Advertising's Appropriation of Political Ideology in China's Social Transition," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (August), 231-44.

Berg, Bruce L. (2007), *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bogdan, Robert and Steven J. Taylor (1975), *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences*, New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bonsu, Samuel (2009), "Colonial Images in Global Times: Consumer Interpretations of Aftrica and Africans in Advertising," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 12 (1), 1-25.

Botti, Simona, Kristina Orfali, and Sheena S. Iyengar (2009), "Tragic Choices: Autonomy and Emotional Responses to Medical Decisions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (October), 337-52.

Brody, Elaine M. (2004), *Women in the Middle: Their Parent Care Years*, New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Carlson, Les, Sanford Grossbart, and J. Kathleen Stuenkel (1992), "The Role of Parental Socialization Types on Differential Family Communication Patterns Regarding Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 1 (1), 31-52.

Charmaz, Kathy (2006), *Constructing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Churchill, Scott D. and Frederick J. Wertz (1985), "An Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology for Consumer Research: Historical, Conceptual, and Methodological Foundations," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 12, ed. Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Moris B. Holbrook, Provo UT: Association for Consumer Research, 550-55.

Collins, Gail (2009), *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*, New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Commuri, Suraj and James W. Gentry (2000), "Opportunities for Family Research in Marketing," *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 2000 (8), http://www.amsreview.org.

Connidis, Ingrid Arnet and Julie Ann McMullin (2002), "Sociological Ambivalence and Family Ties: A Critical Perspective," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64 (August), 558-67.

Cotte, June and Kathryn A. Latour (2009), "Blackjack in the Kitchen: Understanding Online Versus Casino Gambling," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (February), 742-58.

Cotte, June, S. Ratneshwar, and David Glen Mick (2004), "The Times of Their Lives: Phenomenological and Metaphorical Characteristics of Consumer Timestyles," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (September), 333-45.

Cotte, June and Stacy L. Wood (2004), "Families and Innovative Consumer Behavior: A Triadic Analysis of Sibling and Parental Influence," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (June), 78-86.

Coyne, Imelda T. (1997), "Sampling in Qualitative Research. Purposful and Theoretical Sampling; Merging or Clear Boundaries?," *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26 (3), 623-30.

Creswell, John W. (2003), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, Thousand Oaks California: Sage Publications.

Crockett, David and Melanie Wallendorf (2004), "The Role of Normative Political Ideology in Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (December), 511-28.

Dellasega, Cheryl and Kathy Mastrian (1995), "The Process and Consequences of Institutionaizing an Elder," *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 17 (2), 123-40.

Denzin, Norman K. (2004), "The Art and Politics of Interpretation," in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*, ed. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, New York: Oxford University Press, 447-72.

DeVault, Marjorie L. (1991), *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Douthitt, Robin A. and Joanne M. Fedyk (1990), "Family Composition, Parental Time, and Market Goods: Life Cycle Trade-Offs," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 24 (1), 110-33.

Durgee, Jeffrey F. (1987), "Phenomenology: New Methods for Asking Questions and Interpreting Results," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, ed. Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, Provo UT: Association for Consumer Research, 561.

Ehrensaft, Diane (2001), "The Kinderdult: The New Child Born to Conflict between Work and Family," in *Working Families: The Transformation of the American Home*, ed. Rosanna Hertz and Nancy L. Marshall, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ekstrom, Karin M. (2004), "Guest Editor's Introduction: Family Consumption," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 7 (3), 185-90.

Epp, Amber M. and Linda L. Price (2008), "Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (June), 50-70.

--- (2010), "The Storied Life of Singularized Objects: Forces of Agency and Network Transformation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (February), 820-37.

Erlandson, David A., Edward L. Harris, Barbara L. Skipper, and Steve D. Allen (1993), *Doing Naturalistic Inquiry: A Guide to Methods*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Fischer, Eileen and Stephen J. Arnold (1990), "More Than a Labor of Love: Gender Roles and Christmas Gift Shopping," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (December), 333-45.

Fischer, Eileen, Cele C. Otnes, and Linda Tuncay (2007), "Pursuing Parenthood: Integrating Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives on Persistent Goal Striving," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (December), 425-503.

Fournier, Susan (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (March), 343-73.

Goulding, Christina (1999), "Consumer Research, Interpretive Paradigms and Methodological Ambiguities," *European Journal of Marketing*, 33 (9/10), 859-73.

--- (2003), "Issues in Representing the Postmodern Consumer," *Qualitative Market Research - An International Journal*, 6 (3), 152-59.

Goulding, Christina, Avi Shankar, Richard Elliott, and Robin Canniford (2009), "The Marketplace Management of Illicit Pleasure," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (February), 759-71.

Grønhøj, Alice (2006), "Communication About Consumption: A Family Process Perspective on 'Green' Consumer Practices," *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 5 (6), 491-503.

Guba, Egon G. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (1998), "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research," in *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc, 195-220.

Hackley, Christopher E. (2003), *Doing Research Projects in Marketing, Management and Consumer Research*: Routledge.

Haley, Heather-Lyn, Maureen Perry-Jenkins, and Amy Armenia (2001), "Workplace Policies and the Psychological Well-Being of First-Time Parents," in *Working Families: The Transformation of the American Home*, ed. Rosanna Hertz and Nancy L. Marshall, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hays, Sharon (1996), *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hirschman, Elizabeth C. (1986), "Humanistic Inquiry in Marketing Research: Philosophy, Method, and Criteria," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23 (August), 237-49.

Hitzler, Ronald and Thomas S. Eberle (2004), "Phenomenological Life-World Analysis," in *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, ed. Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff and Ines Steinke, London: Sage Publications, 67-71.

Hochschild, Arlie (2003), *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell (1989), *The Second Shift*, New York: Avon Books.

--- (2001), "Eavesdropping Children, Adult Deals, and Cultures of Care," in *Working Families: The Transformation of the American Home*, ed. Rosanna Hertz and Nancy L. Marshall, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Hogg, Margaret K., Carolyn Folkman Curasi, and Pauline Maclaran (2004), "The (Re-) Configuration of Production and Consumption in Empty Nest Households/Families," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 7 (3), 239-59.

Holt, Douglas B. and Craig J. Thompson (2004), "Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (September), 425-40.

Hudson, Laurel Anderson and Julie L. Ozanne (1988), "Alternative Ways of Seeking Knowledge in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (March), 508-21.

Huff, Aimee Dinnin (2011), "Buying the Girlfriend Experience: An Exploration of the Consumption Experiences of Male Customers of Escorts," in *Research in Consumer Behavior*, Vol. 13, ed. Russell W. Belk, Kent Grayson, Albert Muñiz and Hope Jensen Schau, Bingley, UK: Emerald, 111-26.

Huff, Aimee Dinnin and June Cotte (2010), "It's Been My Number One Source of Stress: The Decision to Pay for Care," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 37, ed. Margaret C. Campbell, Jeff Inman and Rik Pieters, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 729-30.

--- (2011), "Caught between a Rock and a Hard Place: Cultural Influences on the Consumption of Commercial Long-Term Elder Care," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 38, ed. Darren W. Dahl, Gita V. Johar and Stijn M. J. van Osselaer, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

--- (2012), "The Ambivalent Role of Adult Siblings in Family Decisions About Elder Care," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 39, ed. Rohini Ahluwalia, Tanya Chartrand and Rebecca Ratner, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

--- (2013), "Using the Marketplace to Reconceptualize Motherhood," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 40, ed. Zeynep Gurhan-Canli, Cele Otnes and Juliet Rui Zhu, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

John, Deborah Roedder (1999), "Consumer Socialization of Children: A Retrospective Look at Twenty-Five Years of Research," *Jounral of Consumer Research*, 26 (December), 183-213.

Kang, Yong-Soon and Nancy M. Ridgway (1996), "The Importance of Consumer Market Interactions as a Form of Social Support for Elderly Consumers," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 15 (1), 108-17.

Kozinets, Robert V. (2008), "Technology/Ideology: How Ideological Fields Influence Consumers' Technology Narratives," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (April), 865-81.

--- (2010), *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Leedy, Paul D. (1997), *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Levy, Sidney J. (2006), "History of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing," in *Handbook of Qualitative Reserach Methods in Marketing*, ed. Russell W. Belk, Cheltenham UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 3-16.

Lincoln, Yvonna S. and Egon G. Guba (1985), *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Macinnis, Deborah J. and Valerie S. Folkes (2010), "The Disciplinary Status of Consumer Behavior: A Sociology of Science Perspective on Key Controversies," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (April), 899-914.

McCracken, Grant (1988), *The Long Interview*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mick, David Glen (2006), "Presidential Address: Meaning and Mattering through Transformative Consumer Research," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 33, ed. Cornelia Pechmann and Linda L. Price, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

Milrod, Christine and Ronald Weitzer (2012), "The Intimacy Prism: Emotion Management among the Clients of Escorts," *Men and Masculinities*, 15 (5), 447-67.

Moisander, Johanna (2006), "Corporate Narratives of Information Society: Making up the Mobile Consumer Subject," *Consumption Markets and Culture*, 9 (4), 257-75.

Moisander, Johanna, Lisa Peñaloza, and Anu Valtonen (2009), "From Cct to Ccc: Building Consumer Culture Community," in *Explorations in Consumer Culture Theory*, ed. John F. Jr. Sherry and Eileen Fischer, New York: Routledge.

Moisio, Risto, Eric J. Arnould, and Linda L. Price (2004), "Between Mothers and Markets: Constructing Family Identity through Homemade Food," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4 (3), 361-84.

Monto, Martin A. and Deana Julka (2009), "Conceiving of Sex as a Commodity: A Study of Arrested Customers of Female Street Prostitutes," *Western Criminology Review*, 10 (1), 1-14.

Moschis, George P. (1985), "The Role of Family Communication in Consumer Socialization of Children and Adolescents," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11 (March), 898-913.

Moustakas, Clark E. (1994), *Phenomenological Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Murray, Jeff B. and Julie L. Ozanne (1991), "The Critical Imagination: Emancipatory Interests in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18 (2), 129-44.

Myers, Elizabeth (1985), "Phenomenological Analysis of the Importance of Special Possessions: An Exploratory Study," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 12, ed. Elizabeth C. Hirschman and Moris B. Holbrook, Provo UT: Association for Consumer Research, 560-65.

Noble, John, William Bithoney, Peter Macdonald, Michale Thank, John Dickinson, Gordon Guyatt, Howard Bauchner, Eric Hardt, James Heffernan, and Arthur Eskew (1994), "The Core Content of a Generalist Curriculum for General Internal Medicine, Family Practice, and Pediatrics," *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 9 (1), S31-S42.

Patton, Michael Quinn (1990), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Newbury Park CA: Sage.

--- (2002), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, Newbury Park CA: Sage.

Penrod, Janice and Cheryl Dellasga (1998), "Caregivers' Experiences in Making Placement Decisions," *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 20 (6), 706-32.

Raymark, Patrick H. (2000), "Accepting and Rejecting Medical Treatment: A Comparison of Decisions Made for Self Versus Those Made for a Significant Other," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30 (11), 2409-39.

Rindfleisch, Aric, James E. Burroughs, and Frank Denton (1997), "Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (March), 312-25.

Roberts, James A., Chris Manolis, and John F. Tanner (2003), "Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Buying: A Reinquiry and Extension," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31 (3), 300-11.

Sanders, Teela (2008), "Male Sexual Scripts: Intimacy, Sexuality and Pleasure in the Purchase of Commercial Sex," *Sociology*, 42 (3), 400-17.

Sandikci, Özlem and Güliz Ger (2010), "Veiling in Style: How Does a Stigmatized Practice Become Fashionable?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (1), 15-36.

Schau, Hope Jensen, Mary C. Gilly, and Mary Wolfinbarger (2009), "Consumer Identity Renaissance: The Resurgence of Identity-Inspired Consumption in Retirement," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (August), 255-76.

Schor, Juliet B. (1992), *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, New York: BasicBooks.

Schouten, John W. (1991), "Selves in Transition: Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (March), 412-25.

Schouten, John W. and James H. McAlexander (1995), "Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (June), 43-61.

Sherry, John F. Jr. (1991), "Postmodern Alternatives: The Interpretive Turn in Consumer Research," in *Handbook of Consumer Behavior*, ed. Thomas S. Robertson and Harold H. Kassarjian, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall In.

Spiggle, Susan (1994), "Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 491-503.

Tadajewski, Mark (2006), "Remembering Motivation Research: Toward an Alternative Genealogy of Interpretive Consumer Research," *Marketing Theory*, 6 (4), 429-66.

Tappan, Mark B. (2001), "Interpretive Psychology: Stories, Circles, and Understanding Lived Experience," in *From Subjects to Subjectivities: A Handbook of Interpretive and Participatory Methods*, ed. Deborah L. Tolman and Mary Brydon-Miller, New York: New York University Press, 45-56.

Tesch, Renata (1994), "The Contribution of a Qualitative Method: Phenomenological Research," in *An Introduction to Educational Research*, ed. C. Vaughn Langenbach and L. Aagaard, Needham Heights MA: Allyn & Bacon, 143-57.

The VOICE Group (2010), "Buying into Motherhood? Problematic Consumption and Ambivalence in Transitional Phases," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 13 (4), 373-97.

Thompson, Craig J. (1996), "Caring Consumers: Gendered Consumption Meanings and the Juggling Lifestyle," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (March), 388-407.

--- (1997), "Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights from the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (November), 438-55.

Thompson, Craig J. and Diana L. Haytko (1997), "Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (June), 15-42.

Thompson, Craig J. and Elizabeth C. Hirschman (1995), "Understanding the Socialized Body: A Poststructuralist Analysis of Consumers' Self-Conceptions, Body Images, and Self-Care Practices," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 139-53.

Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander, and Howard R. Pollio (1989), "Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (September), 133-46.

--- (1990), "The Lived Meaning of Free Choice: An Existential-Phenomenological Description of Everyday Consumer Experiences of Contemporary Married Women," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (December), 346-61.

Thompson, Craig J., Howard R. Pollio, and William B Locander (1994), "The Spoken and the Unspoken: A Hermeneutic Approach to Understanding the Cultural Viewpoints That Underlie Consumers' Expressed Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 432-52.

Thompson, Craig J. and Siok Kuan Tambyah (1999), "Trying to Be Cosmopolitan," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26 (December), 214-41.

Thompson, Craig J. and Kelly Tian (2007), "Reconstructing the South: How Commercial Myths Compete for Identity Value through the Ideological Shaping of Popular Memories and Countermemories," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (February), 595-613.

Tolman, Deborah L. and Mary Brydon-Miller (2001), "Interpretive and Participatory Research Methods," in *From Subjects to Subjectivities: A Handbook of Interpretive and Participatory Methods*, ed. Deborah L. Tolman and Mary Brydon-Miller, New York: New York University Press, 4-11.

Van Manen, Max (1990), *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press.

Wallendorf, Melanie and Eric Arnould (1991), "'We Gather Together:' Consumption Rituals of Thanksgiving Day," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18 (June), 13-31.

Weitzer, Ronald (2005), "New Directions in Research on Prostitution," *Crime, Law & Social Change*, 43, 211-35.

--- (2009), "Sociology of Sex Work," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 213-34.

Wilkes, Robert E. (1995), "Household Life-Cycle Stages, Transitions, and Product Expenditures," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (June), 27-42.

Willig, Carla (2007), "Reflections on the Use of a Phenomenological Method," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 4, 209-25.

Zelizer, Viviana (2005), *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

CHAPTER 2: COMPLEXITIES OF CONSUMPTION: THE CASE OF

COMMERCIAL CHILDCARE

Imagine a consumer named Maria. Maria has an important consumption choice to make, for a service she will use for years. She researches the alternatives and establishes a consideration set. However, as she engages in the choice process, she begins to encounter significant role conflicts, as well as stress and guilt. Maria needs to make her decision quickly, and she discovers that many of her preferred options are not available. Ultimately, with time running out, she is forced to use a service that was not her first or even her second most preferred option. As Maria engages in ongoing consumption of this service, her role conflicts do not dissipate, and she experiences discernible levels of stress and guilt related to using the service. Would the reader be surprised to know that Maria is satisfied and content with the service itself – even though it involves caring for her baby?

In this research, I study mothers who choose and use childcare services, focusing on the interaction between these consumers and the social and regulatory environment surrounding their choices. There were more than 12 million American preschoolers in childcare arrangements in 2005, with about half of those using non-relative care, such as day care centers or nannies, and about half using some non-parental relatives for care (e.g., a grandparent) (Laughlin 2010). This is a unique context because a number of complexities exist in childcare consumption; with a highly consequential choice, considerable constraints on the choice process, and no option to defer choosing, the outcome is often very different from a conventional consumer choice (Leach 2009). Further, in many cases the preferred options are simply not available. It is perplexing, then, that mothers are able to adapt to the outcome such that they are satisfied with their

childcare service, particularly because the nature of the service precludes mothers from tolerating an unsatisfactory outcome.

My research goal is to understand consumption within this unique context, from the perspective of the consumer who initially chooses and then continues to consume the childcare service. I fuse together theoretical perspectives on the choice process and choice constraints, outcomes of choice, maternal roles, stress in consumption, adaptation, and well-being to illustrate the unique complexities in the childcare consumption experience for mothers. Further, in my analysis I have bracketed my preunderstanding of this consumption context, particularly as it relates to tensions between mothers' experiences and expectations. My research questions are thus: What difficulties emerge from the different roles mothers play, and the tension between their expectations and their experiences? How can consumers reconstruct what was an unpleasant and constrained decision process into a free choice process after the fact? The context I use to explore these questions is one where there is a repeated consumption of a service (rather than a one-time service encounter). Throughout the investigation, I infuse my analysis of the consumer with my analysis of the social and regulatory environment surrounding her.

This research contributes to our understanding of consumer choice in several ways. First, I show that applying a conventional consumer behavior lens precludes sufficient understanding of the phenomenon; examining choice (the decision) separately from subsequent usage (the consumption), as discrete stages, can hinder understanding of how consumers experience and behave throughout the entire process. Second, I reveal positive consequences of ongoing consumption even when the outcome was not deliberately selected, and does not reflect preference. On a theoretical level, I account for

47

our informants' satisfaction with choice outcomes that are often not reflective of preference. Third, by broadly exploring the complexities of ongoing consumption, I offer additional support for the idea that having few choices in a complex consumption context can actually bolster well-being (Botti and Iyengar 2006). Indeed, I find that these women did not report *choosing*, in the classic sense of that term in the consumer research literature, or even in lay theories of choice. As I demonstrate with my data, what is fascinating is that these consumers still frame this issue as a choice after the fact, which is entirely consistent with the North American cultural preoccupation with the preeminence of choice and autonomy (e.g., Botti and McGill 2006; Walsh et al. 2011). In explicating the unique complexities of consumption in this context, I reveal the ways that conventional perspectives on consumer choice and post-choice outcomes cannot adequately characterize childcare consumption for and by mothers.

This research also contributes to our understanding of motherhood and consumption, the intersection of which is complicated and worthy of special consideration (Hochschild 2012; The VOICE Group 2010a, b; Zelizer 1985). Additionally I offer some policy implications based on a deep understanding of a relevant and widespread social phenomenon: consumption of childcare services by mothers who return to the workforce after a maternity leave.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In this section, I briefly review literature relevant for understanding conventional consumer choices, and I then argue that a broader perspective is needed to understand the complexities in childcare consumption. A sizeable body of research on choice focuses on

how consumers form preferences, make decisions, and experience constraints on the choice process (e.g., Bettman, Luce, and Payne 1998; Luce, Bettman, and Payne 2001; Payne et al. 1992; Payne, Bettman, and Johnson 1993). From this perspective of consumer choice, four key metagoals allow the consumer to identify the preferred alternative and guide decision-making: maximizing accuracy, minimizing cognitive effort, minimizing negative emotion, and maximizing ease of justification. Consumers then use heuristics to navigate the task of making trade-offs between alternatives, and the difficulty experienced when making trade-offs can influence both the process of choosing and the outcome itself (Luce, Bettman, and Payne 2003). Another body of literature examines the outcomes of choice, such as satisfaction or regret, or the employment of psychological defenses. I use these bodies of literature as a starting point; we identify how they shed some light on choosing and using childcare, but I also identify how focusing on either the choice *process* (i.e., pre-purchase phase) or the *outcome* (i.e., post-purchase phase) alone, compromises our ability to understand how childcare is actually consumed, over time, from the perspective of the consumer/mother in a given social and regulatory environment.

Constraints on Choice *Process*

In the choice literature, constraints exist as limitations on the act of choosing, and as restrictions on the number of choices, and constraints impact both the choice process and the ultimate decisions (Mittelstaedt, Duke, and Mittelstaedt 2009). Several sizeable constraints impact the pre-purchase phases of childcare consumption. First, mothers experience time pressure to arrange childcare as their maternity leaves draw to an end.

Time pressure produces negative emotions, which interfere with the choice process (Edland and Svenson 1993; Maule, Hockey, and Bdzola 2000), and while there remains a dearth of understanding about how time constraints influence post-choice outcomes such as regret or satisfaction, the implication seems to be that consumers are less satisfied with their choices made under time constraints. Second, even though consumers prefer to defer choice when faced with difficult trade-offs (Luce et al. 2001), mothers experience a lack of ability to defer choice. This forced choice situation influences decision strategies and response to the outcome (Dhar 1997; Luce 1998).

Third, childcare options in the consumer's consideration set are often not available at the necessary time of consumption. Waiting lists are commonplace, and many mothers find themselves hurriedly re-constructing their consideration sets as their return-to-work date looms closer (Leach 2009). Consumer researchers typically examine choice as the outcome of a deliberative process, wherein the individual takes action to match a preference with an outcome or accepts the default option (Walsh et al. 2011). However, there is an insufficient understanding of how consumers respond to outcomes that are not reflective of preference or the default option.

Fourth, childcare is a very substantial monetary outlay for most, if not all, families. The cost of good quality, regulated childcare for infants is high in Canada; costs typically range from $10,000 per year for an informal homecare arrangement, to $15,000 per year for a licensed daycare facility, to a minimum $22,000 per year for a nanny. While on average slightly less than in Canada, childcare costs are also high in the U.S. (Laughlin 2010). In the U.S., Census Bureau data show child care spending accounts for a higher percentage of a poor family's income: 28% of family spending, compared with

7% of family spending for families above the poverty line (Laughlin 2010). Finally, stress

functions as a constraint by influencing decision strategies (e.g., Moschis 2007;

Raghunathan, Pham, and Corfman 2006; Yi and Baumgartner 2004). There are

conflicting accounts of how stress impacts choice (Payne and Bettman 2004), but

certainly negative emotions are likely if consumers feel that they had to compromise on a

key metagoal, which, in the case of childcare, is likely to be the goal of finding good (or

at least acceptable) care (Leach 2009).

The specific constraints facing mothers as they select childcare services make

these highly consequential choices more difficult. The literature I have reviewed so far

sheds light on how constrained choices are experienced by consumers. However, a

narrow perspective on constrained choice would not allow us to capture the true nature of

childcare consumption from the perspective of the consumer. As a result, I use this

literature as a springboard for a deep exploration of the ways in which mothers consume

childcare on an ongoing basis.

Constrained Choice *Outcomes*

Much of the research on consumer choice has examined choice in contexts where

the consumer is presented with a number of alternatives and asked to select his/her

preferred alternative. Typically, consumers believe that more, and more unconstrained,

choice will make them more satisfied, but we do know from prior research this is not

always the case; while choice is distinctly linked to well-being in Western cultures,

consumers are less likely to be satisfied with outcomes from larger sets of alternatives

and more differentiation among those alternatives (Botti and Iyengar 2004; Iyengar and

Lepper 2000; Markus and Schwartz 2010). Further, research on choices in a highly

consequential context, with significant constraints on choice processes, forced choice,

and limited availability of alternatives, has revealed that consumers often experience

post-purchase regret or dissatisfaction (e.g., Mittelstaedt et al. 2009). The chooser is

unlikely to be pleased with the outcome of his/her choice under these circumstances,

often because the outcome is not reflective of true preference.

Disappointment and regret are two possible consequences for consumers who

perceive the choice outcome to be worse than that which was expected (Zeelenberg et al.

2000). Disappointment is an emotional response to an adverse outcome that was caused

by external circumstances, while regret arises when the outcome is perceived to be

inferior to the forgone alternatives and results from the chooser feeling responsible for the

poor choice (Zeelenberg et al. 2000). This distinction between disappointment and regret

is important; although both entail negative emotional consequences, they differ in regard

to the role of the chooser. Consumers who feel disappointed in the consequences could

turn to the regulators (governments) who they may feel caused the consequences. So, for

example, a consumer disappointed in her childcare solution may place the blame for a

severely constrained choice on government's failure to provide adequate childcare

solutions for working women.

Regret can be experienced if the chooser feels he/she made a bad choice (i.e., the

outcome is regrettable), or if the chooser feels his/her decision process was poor (i.e., the

choice process is regrettable) (Pieters and Zeelenberg 2005). This suggests that, in the

context of childcare choices, individuals may be prone to experience regret if the

outcome is inferior to non-chosen outcomes (including staying home to raise one's

52

children), or if the process of actually arriving at an outcome is seen as sub-optimal. Given the nature of the context, we would expect that many mothers would experience some degree of regret as a consequence of the childcare being consumed; the alternatives in the initial consideration set may function to induce regret (Luce et al. 2001) for mothers whose preferred childcare was not available. However, perceived responsibility for the choice diminishes when the choice set contains less differentiated alternatives (Botti and McGill 2006), suggesting that regret may be lessened if the childcare service providers in the consideration set are perceived to be relatively similar across important attributes, something that tighter regulations and standards could achieve. Importantly, however, both regret and disappointment toward a chosen outcome can prompt behaviors that mitigate the negative consequences of the outcome (Pieters and Zeelenberg 2005).

Coping is a possible outcome of sub-optimal choices or choice processes, and it typically follows, or results from, conscious dissatisfaction or regret associated with a choice process (Pavia and Mason 2004). Coping is functional in that it allows the individual to diminish negative emotions. Duhachek (2005, 42) defines coping as "the set of cognitive and behavioral processes initiated by consumers in response to emotionally arousing, stress inducing interactions with the environment aimed at bringing forth more desirable emotional states and reduced levels of stress." Consumers develop strategies to cope with negative emotions associated with a regrettable or inferior consumption outcome. These coping strategies can be employed during the deliberation process and/or in the post-acquisition phase, as consumption actually begins (Mick and Fournier 1998).

Finally, adaptability is a concept that is related to regret, disappointment, and coping; all concepts important in understanding outcomes of constrained consumption.

53

The concept of adaptability is not well defined in our literature, and it is often used synonymously with resilience (Seery, Holman, and Silver 2010). The two concepts are similar yet distinct in terms of consumer behavior. Resilience is more closely linked to coping, and involves the ability to bounce back from adverse situations (Richardson 2002). Individuals facing an externally determined outcome, rather than the outcome of a personal choice, can demonstrate resiliency by psychologically adjusting to the circumstances such that they become tolerable (Stephens et al. 2009). In contrast, adaptability can be understood as modifying oneself to the outcome in such a way that the circumstances are embraced and subjective well-being is enhanced. This conceptualization is in line with that of Searle and Ward (1990), who also establish a link between adaptation and personal well-being. Adaptability therefore can be understood as a good fit between an individual and a circumstance marked by stress (Berry and Sam 1997). Both qualities are functional in that they enable individuals to reduce negative emotions, but adaptability is linked to realizing optimal outcomes, whereas resiliency is linked to managing adverse outcomes. That is, resiliency involves coping with sub-optimal outcomes in order to mitigate the negative consequences, and adaptability involves modifications to the self, such that seemingly sub-optimal outcomes actually come to improve happiness. More than merely a resolution, adapting involves an improvement.

In this research, I initially sought to understand how consumption constraints influenced the choice *process* for mothers, and then to seek connections between the constraints and negative consumption *outcomes*, such as disappointment, regret, or coping. However, I came to understand that complexities related to childcare

consumption are best appreciated when the consumption process is viewed in its entirety; many of the challenges associated with the choice process are also prevalent as mothers use childcare. Unlike many other consumption situations, it would be a detriment to our understanding to demarcate choice from consumption; this is one of the most vivid differences in our approach. I take a broad view of childcare consumption, and am concerned with characterizing the complexities involved in both choosing and using childcare on an ongoing basis, within a given social and regulatory environment. Turning from what other researchers have established, I now outline in more detail the specific consumption context under investigation herein.

RESEARCH CONTEXT: WORKING MOTHERS AND CHILDCARE

Although I focus on Canadian mothers choosing childcare services for their infants upon returning to the workforce from a maternity leave, I recognize the important role fathers play in this choice in many families. However, my informants took, and/or were given, the responsibility for the consumer search and choice process (this is a typical finding of research in this area; see also Vincent and Ball 2001; Vincent and Ball 2006). Indeed, this is also the approach taken by the U.S. Census Bureau when researching childcare (Laughlin 2010). In the overwhelming number of cases, mothers are the primary decision makers for childcare services (Leach 2009). In this paper, I examine the experiences of mothers who have made decisions about childcare in the last year (i.e., chosen a nanny, daycare facility, home-based daycare, etc.) and who are now living with that choice and its consequences, illuminating some interesting phenomena about the consequences of choice.

It is commonplace in North America for families to put their young children in some form of childcare while both parents, or single parents, return to the workforce. As a result of the high cost of commercial care, families are making increasing use of informal care arrangements, such as grandparent care, making it all the more difficult to determine the proportions and numbers of families using various forms of childcare (Leach 2009). However, in Canada, as well as the U.S. and Britain, the majority of parents feel that parental in-home care is ideal for infants, therefore decisions to outsource childcare to a market-based service provider are culturally (and often individually) perceived to be inferior to maternal care (Zelizer 1985). Because of this, mothers are very concerned with finding good quality care that they perceive to be an acceptable substitute for their own care. Indeed, Duncan et al. (2003) point out that in the United Kingdom public policy in the childcare realm includes a "rationality mistake" that assumes that if childcare were available most (or all) mothers would prefer to work; their data clearly show segments of mothers who clearly prefer to be at home with young children. Herein, I focus on those mothers who, for economic or other reasons, have decided to seek childcare for their infants.

Mothers encounter numerous challenges to finding a childcare service when it is time to return to the workforce (Leach 2009), although approximately 70% of children under the age of two in Canada have mothers that are employed (Bezanson 2009). As mothers prepare to return to the workforce, they must navigate the often confusing market of childcare providers. They struggle with issues of affordability, quality, and availability, and attempt to manage busy schedules dictated by their employers and care providers (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach 2001; Huff and Cotte 2010). In Canada,

working women who are eligible to collect employment insurance are entitled to a job-protected, paid maternity leave of 15 weeks, and an additional job-protected, paid parental leave is available to mothers and/or fathers for a combined total of 35 weeks. Leave payments are equal to 55% of earnings prior to the leave, to a maximum of $477 per week. Better workplaces top up these payments and offer extended leaves (Baines 2009). The result is that many Canadian mothers (and, increasingly, some fathers) are able to take a full year of paid leave to care for an infant.

This relatively generous timing is in sharp contrast to the situation facing American mothers. In the U.S., mothers may take a job-protected, unpaid leave of up to 12 weeks following the birth of a child, unless they are employed by a small business. Approximately half of American employers offer a short (1-6 week) paid maternity leave but the federal government makes no provisions for a paid leave (Leach 2009). Nearly two thirds of women return to the workforce within a few months of giving birth, making it typical for infants to be placed in some sort of childcare (Harsch 2006). Thus, our Canadian informants likely had more time and less financial pressure to make their decisions than American mothers.

Findings based in Canada may be more conservative in terms of the pressure faced by moms shopping for care, but in both countries demand often exceeds supply especially for full-time care of infants less than 12 months old (Baines 2009; Clarke-Stewart and Allhusen 2005). Consequently, most alternatives in a mother's consideration set are simply not available when she needs childcare. Mothers are often "forced into accepting arrangements" with "clear limits on their agency" (Vincent and Ball 2001, 649). Lack of childcare supply prevents many mothers from returning to work before

their 12 month maternity leave ends, and creates a significant shortage of spaces for young children in full time care. As a result, many women put their names on several waiting lists as soon as they discover they are pregnant, yet still find themselves without full-time care for their 12-month-old children. Additionally, as with any service, it can be difficult to assess quality of care before it is experienced. In the childcare marketplace, very few brands exist to facilitate choice, and many mothers find themselves initially overwhelmed when making judgments about individual service providers. Further, choice is limited by the fact that some care arrangements are simply not compatible with parents' work schedules. For example, licensed daycares in my Canadian context are not able to hold a child in care for more than 9 hours per day, creating logistical dilemmas for parents who need to be at work for a standard 9am-5pm day. As a result, the physical location of childcare in relation to parents' employment and/or home is a critical factor in determining whether a particular service provider is acceptable. This problem is exacerbated for families where the parents work exceptionally long hours or shift work.

Within this context, childcare consumption is also heavily influenced by normative constraints that are external to the mother (Lundgren et al. 2001). One of these involves gender-based expectations that impact women's enactments of motherhood and their use of childcare. Socially constructed conceptions of gender have important implications for women's consumption performances in the marketplace (Fischer and Arnold 1990). Socially constructed ideas of motherhood, the romanticization of childhood, and the sacralization of domestic life are important influences on gendered consumption (Giddens 1993; Thompson 1996). Western cultures continue to embrace a myth of idealized motherhood that is rooted in the 1950s stereotype of exclusive,

intensive maternal care (Friedan 1997; Scarr 1998), and new mothers can be especially

vulnerable to idealizations of motherhood in the marketplace, leading them to cope with

the transition using consumption (The VOICE Group 2010b). Indeed, conceptions of

motherhood, a "basic component of the female domain" (Giddens 1993, 177) contribute

to the underlying complexities involved in childcare consumption, because a child's

successful development is seen as a direct outcome of good, motherly care (Vincent and

Ball 2006). Caring for an infant is not an intellectual connection, but rather "an

unsophisticated activity of the body and emotions" (Vincent and Ball 2006, 112), and

although much research has refuted the notion that infant-mother relations are negatively

impacted by placing an infant in care, this presumption continues to haunt working

mothers (Clarke-Stewart and Allhusen 2005). Indeed,

> *…the issue of nonparental childcare is a complex and controversial one for*
>
> *parents, researchers, and policy makers alike. No topic lights up a cocktail party*
>
> *conversation or a call-in radio program's switchboard like the question of*
>
> *whether a mother should stay at home with her baby or return to the workforce.*
>
> *(Clarke-Stewart and Allhusen 2005, 9)*

This subject is "controversial" only because it reflects the discord between many

women's autonomy and broad, pervasive social patterns. Outsourcing childcare to

market-based service providers is seen as an inferior option to maternal care because

women are simply expected to form deep emotional bonds with their children, and to

want to stay at home (Hochschild 1989). (Similarly pervasive is the expected pattern for

men's working life: when a baby arrives the expectation is that the father will return to work as soon as possible).

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STUDY

I conducted depth interviews with 15 mothers who had chosen childcare for their children in the past year. Interviews were conducted in rural, small town, and urban settings throughout Ontario. I sampled to recruit informants who had experienced difficulty finding childcare, and then conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interviews at informants' homes (with the exception of one interview conducted in a bookstore). In each case, informants' children were present for at least part of the interview, but husbands and other adults were not present. Interviews were unstructured, and informants were asked to "share your story about choosing care for your [son, daughter]," and encouraged to "start wherever you like" (McCracken 1988). When necessary, I used prompts to maintain mothers' comfort, promote deeper reflection, and to encourage dialogue about issues that had been identified as important by previous informants. I was able to quickly establish a good rapport with all informants, and we were pleased with the openness and candor with which informants revealed their experiences. The interviews were audiotaped and typically lasted 75 minutes. Detailed field notes were created immediately afterward, and the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. Informants were not compensated, but were thanked with a hand-written, personalized note.

Informants ranged in age from 29 to 41, and had one or two children. All were married (or living common-law), Caucasian, employed at the time of the interview, and spoke English as a first language. All informants had intentionally become parents, gave

birth in Canada, and had been entitled to the 50 week, government-funded maternity

leave. Six mothers chose to return to work before their maternity leaves formally ended,

seven mothers elected to take the standard 50 week leave, and one mother took advantage

of a 5-year (unpaid) leave offered by her employer. None had husbands who took

parental leave either consecutively or concurrently with the mother's maternity leave, and

none had childcare available at their place of employment. In Table 1 I present a

summary of participant profiles using pseudonyms.

As is the norm in rigorous qualitative data analysis, I began my analysis by

reviewing and reflecting on the audiotapes, field notes, and transcripts. After thematically

coding the individual transcripts, I attended to emergent themes and sought to reveal

idiosyncratic and shared meanings. The interpretation process involved part-to-whole

comparisons, and developed through many iterations (Spiggle 1994; Thompson,

Locander, and Pollio 1990; Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994). Peer debriefing was

used throughout, and emerging interpretations were challenged and refined during

qualitative data analysis workshops.

I present the findings by first examining why many women use childcare services,

beyond the economic incentive to return to work. Guided by my two main research

questions, I first explore the difficulties, and the tension between mothers' expectations

and their experiences. Given the lack of demonstratively free choice (in that most

informants had, in the end, only one option), I next explore informants' reconstruction of

this process, post-hoc, into a freely made choice. By looking at childcare services as both

a choice and an ongoing consumption experience, I are able to argue that conventional

conceptions of the choice process and choice outcomes are inherently woven together.

Clashing Expectations and Experiences

Full-Time Motherhood

I begin by examining our informants' reflections on their experiences during maternity leave, because these narratives frame and shape the consumption context. All informants noted that they felt they should have enjoyed their time at home more than they did. My informants made implicit and explicit references to this social norm and the pressures to take pleasure in caring for their children.

Joanne, a senior accountant with over ten years of experience, was surprised by how unrewarding her maternity leaves were, particularly because she had been raised in a large family with a stay-at-home mother. She has three sons, and remembers thinking on each maternity leave that "I can't sit in here for another hour and play blocks." Joanne recounted the shock she experienced when realizing that maternity leave was not as rewarding as she had expected:

> *I thought I would like it more. I thought I would get home and I would say "oh man, you're going to have to peel me away to go back to work." And so, when I didn't and when I liked to go back to work that was the really "wow." I was just surprised. [Staying at home,] a) it's not good for me, I feel like I'm going crazy and b) it's not good for my kids because I have a short temper because I can't stand staying at home all day in this house. I cannot be home all day. So yeah that was very surprising for me. I didn't see myself being that kind of person and, I don't know, it's hard to swallow.*

Joanne had expected to find full-time caregiving very rewarding, and was distressed when her experience contrasted sharply with this expectation.

62

Lauren is a senior manager at a web-based marketing firm. She took a brief maternity leave with her daughter and found the time unsatisfying. She then resumed full-time responsibilities with her career, and juggled full-time childcare while working from home. After her daughter was 12 months old, Lauren enrolled her in daycare. In describing her experience as full-time caregiver, she wished she felt more fulfilled; she was surprised by how much she perceived her daughter as distracting from her career. Lauren struggles with the monotony of full-time caregiving, and didn't feel like "the mom I wanted to be… I always saw myself doing more with her." Lauren also believes she should have derived more fulfillment from engaging in full-time caregiving.

Christine had a very similar experience. Christine is a criminal lawyer with an 18-month-old son. She took a six-month maternity leave, and was shocked by the realization that she did not find that time rewarding. The repetitive tasks of childcare contrasted sharply with the intensity and excitement of her career:

> *Where the rubber hit the road for me is that I saw my ability to tend him and nurture him go down the tubes. The longer [I was home,] that's all I could do. I just, ummm, [crying] I was impatient and I was irritable with him because I was completely dissatisfied. It wasn't a rewarding time for me...I didn't want to be impatient with him, or irritable about various things, or feel selfish because I couldn't do something for myself that day, but I did feel all those things. And then you feel terrible.*

Christine was troubled by her own experience with a period of motherhood that she thought she would, and should, enjoy and treasure.

Erin is an occupational therapist with two children. She also found her maternity leaves to be far less rewarding than she had expected, particularly as she considered her rewarding and challenging career. For Erin, "the optimal situation was to have one parent working, and one parent at home with the kids… I would definitely say that in my perfect vision it would be that I stayed home with the kids." But instead she was surprised by how much she missed her career: "I'm taking a year off to be a parent, and I am only doing for my family what we would tell our patients to do for their families," but she really missed her career, the "job that I worked for, for so long… a job that I really liked!" Like our other informants, Erin's found that maternity leave was less rewarding than she had expected. She recounted feeling unfulfilled by the mundane caregiving associated with young babies, and feeling that she was missing her exciting career.

In my informants' narratives, there is a strong sense that full-time motherhood is the socio-cultural ideal, and mothers should find their time at home rewarding, fulfilling, and productive. My informants experienced their maternity leaves in relation to this ideal, and were troubled by their realization that full-time motherhood, for them, was not how it should have been. Further, my informants experienced maternity leave in relation to their careers, which formed the backbone of personal conceptions of success and productivity. The result was that these mothers needed childcare to accommodate their personal conceptions of rewarding, productive motherhood.

The Challenges of the Maternal Role

The clash between expectations and experience for new mothers in many ways reflects a conflict surrounding the role of mother itself. Not surprisingly, all informants

described genuine feelings of love and devotion to their children, and a desire to do what was best for them. However, while there were differences across women in their experiences as full-time mothers on maternity leave – many enjoyed their time, and some decidedly did not enjoy this time – all the women noted that they felt *they should have* enjoyed their time at home more than they did. This reflects a social ideal carried in the cultural norm for mothering, where the role of the selfless mother is romanticized (Schor 1992), and women are expected to derive fulfillment from providing full-time care to their children (Collins 2009).

The dialectic relationship between love and tiresomeness in parenting is commonly experienced by mothers (Fox 2009), and is linked to efforts to engage in a kind of professional motherhood, marked by careful deliberation of all aspects of childrearing and development (Vincent and Ball 2006). Indeed, the socially constructed idea of motherhood in the previous century (Thompson 1996) has created and enforced the desirability of intense mother-infant relations: "a distinctive feature of socialization in the recent period, characteristic of most strata in modern societies, has been the prominent role of the mother in early child care" (Giddens 1993, 130). Informants made implicit and explicit references to these social pressures to take pleasure in caring for their children, and in enacting the mother role.

Beth has a career that she enjoys, and also enjoys spending time with her two sons on her maternity leaves. However, she feels conflicted with the maternal role. She did not know it was going to be as hard as it was. Beth explicitly differentiated herself from the mom role, from "one of those people who is made to be at home." Beth feels that her own sense of the maternal role is different from what is expected of her:

Other than, you know, a few people here or there saying 'Oh it's going to be tough. It's going to be tough.' I don't think I was prepared. I don't think I mentally realized that it was going to be that difficult.

Sandra, a 41-year-old who has put her career on hold for five years to stay at home with her two young sons, was also explicitly dissatisfied with the role of stay-at-home mother. After much deliberation, she finally chose to put her younger child into commercial care. Like Beth, and several other informants, she is frustrated because she feels that no one had properly prepared her for the role of mother, and she feels her own experiences run contrary to what "everybody" said her time at home should be like. Indeed, she feels the true nature of the maternal role is actively disguised from future mothers:

[kids] are stressful, tiring. You know, I love them, but they are pains in the asses. They are. It's funny; one person when I was pregnant told me the truth. Everybody was like "oh, you're going to be such a great mom and you are going to have a great time." [But] he said "you know what, they are pains in the asses until they are 20 years old."

In addition to the challenge to her professional role, she did not like the role of full-time mom, the full-time caregiver for her children, but she feels that she *should* want to stay home with her children. Dealing with this contradiction results in her ongoing reluctance to place her children in childcare and to return to the workforce.

Christine truly struggled with the realization that she did not find performing the mom role intrinsically rewarding and satisfying. Christine had always planned to return to

her law firm following her maternity leave, but felt immense pressure to enjoy playing the role of full-time mother:

> *I don't think I really got through it very well, to be honest… What bothers me, still, is that I didn't find it satisfying to be at home with [my son] all the time, and it's perplexing to me to find that I needed something more. But I totally do. I was jealous of [my husband] the whole summer for being able to leave the house and deal with other people and do something that he found satisfying that was engaging and stimulating and interesting – and I was cleaning up barf.*
> *(Christine)*

To varying degrees, informants felt that their mom role obliged them to enjoy being a full-time caregiver. Comments concerning what everyone expects, what *normal* mothers are like, expose this widely-held socio-cultural assumption. To this end, maternal role norms consequently complicated their childcare choices as consumers. In addition to the complication due to clashing expectations and experiences of the maternal role, these women experienced sometimes severe conflicts between the role of motherhood and their other roles. This conflict created stress and guilt, and seriously complicated the choice of childcare provider, as I will explore in the next section.

Role Conflict and Stress: No Real Choice

Role Conflict

In accordance with the supermom cultural icon (Thompson 1996), informants believe they should be more adept and be more satisfied with the multiple roles required of them. Many informants describe their families' routines as "chaotic," "stressful," and

"ridiculous," and although their husbands are generally supportive, none have husbands who take an active role in planning, managing, and organizing the aspects of daily life that were necessary for the working mother to resume her career and, consequently, for the children to have childcare. Indeed, the "new mother-ideal is that of the working woman deriving satisfaction from an ability to fulfill both life aims: an independent, socially and vocationally active woman who is a sufficiently good mother" (Harsch 2006, 132). My informants are generally unhappy with their abilities to fulfill all of these roles, and are discouraged by the role conflict inherent in their everyday schedules.

Jennifer reports that she experiences role conflict and that her image of being a good mother is incompatible with using commercial childcare. Her husband has a career that requires him to travel frequently, and this puts added pressure on her to make things "less crazy" at home:

> *…it's like trying to balance everything. You feel bad because they are at daycare all day long. Then you get them home and you only have them for three hours and then it's bedtime. But then, you're exhausted. You're like, thank god it's bedtime but you really haven't spent that quality time with them.*

She feels frustrated because her multiple roles (teacher, mother) require a schedule that is tight and stressful. She believes that she should be better able to manage the conflicts despite the fact that her husband often travels two or three days per week. During both her maternity leaves, Jennifer looked forward to returning to her role as a school teacher. However, she feels that this desire ran contrary to the mom role expected of her, especially after the birth of her second child:

I knew that [going back to work] was the right choice because I really needed to get out and do something for myself as well, as selfish as it sounds… I know there are people who look at me and [think] "I can't believe it, you can afford it. You can stay home. Like, what are you thinking?" I'm just like it's so hard to get them to understand, but I really enjoy working. I really enjoy that part of my life.

Jennifer went on to say that it was important for her to "do something productive for myself and for my mind." Evidence of Jennifer's awareness of the conflict inherent in these multiple roles appears when she describes this desire as selfish. In their study of mothers, Vincent and Ball (2006, 75) found that working moms put forth many justifications for going back to work, while stay-at-home moms felt this decision needed little explanation, as it was the normal, natural thing for a mother to do.

Beth had similar role conflict as her maternity leave drew to a close. She became worried that she would not be able to adequately manage her family's new routine. Her husband left for work early, leaving the bulk of the morning activities to Beth. Beth felt pressure to balance the mother role and the career role in such a way that her professionalism was not impacted, and she felt that she should be adept at incorporating both into a routine.

I actually started practicing the routine because I was really anxious about being late for work. I don't like to be late…I didn't want to give off a bad impression – now that I have a child, I can't be on time for work? …I have to get myself ready and then I have to do breakfast, baths, everything myself…trying to get out the door and possibly be at daycare for 7:45am…and then from there I would continue on driving to work to see if I could actually get to work on time.

69

Prior research has demonstrated that working mothers are particularly susceptible to gender-based stereotypes tied to their abilities as professionals and as mothers (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004; Deutsch and Saxon 1998), and it is more socially acceptable for professional women to accept a modified career path as a result (Lundgren et al. 2001). Certainly, this role conflict complicated consumption for Beth, as any choice she made had to help her mitigate the conflict between mom and professional.

Jessica's role conflict also made her choices much more complex. She describes her own desires to pursue her career as a secondary school teacher. She feels that her decision to return to work after her second maternity leave was in opposition to the role expected of her: "I know quite a few other teachers are like, 'I can't believe you are going to come back with two kids.'" Jessica's situation was complicated by the fact that her job involved a 200km (125 miles) round-trip commute. This requires her to use her mother-in-law for childcare, because local homecare and daycare facilities will not accommodate her need for 11 hours of care per day. Although initially Jessica was very resistant to this situation, as she had a very different parenting style than her mother-in-law, she ultimately saw it as a resolution to her role conflict. While she feels it is taxing on her children to be in care for such long hours, she is comforted by the fact that her mother-in-law is providing the care. Unlike mothers who used non-family care, she described her mother-in-law's involvement as "parenting," rather than "care-giving," indicating that she viewed her mother-in-law as an alternate parent.

Christine experiences role conflict at several levels. She internalizes conflict between what she thought she should do (stay home) with what she wanted to do (go back to work): "I think that what I'm struggling with is that, I mean, I have chosen to go

70

back to work, but [whispering] I really, really, really wanted to." Recognizing maternal role conflict at a more public level, Christine became very emotional as she talked about feeling uncomfortable in her career pursuit because it meant she wouldn't be seen as a good mother:

> *There's something about this expectation especially from the full-time stay-at-home moms, of other women, that that's what [I] should want to do and that wanting to have something outside the home is selfish. And that you don't – you can't possibly be invested in your kids or love your kids as much if you choose, choose, not for financial reasons but you choose to leave the house, and do something else that [your child is] not a part of, and you choose to not be a part of their lives for all that time that you're away. There's something I feel it hits a nerve…*

Christine's strong commitment to her profession is typical of high-profile professionals with children (Lundgren et al. 2001), and she notes that many of her female colleagues with children worked longer hours than she did.

As these women attempted to exert control over their own personal lives, they encountered complexities in the form of structurally rooted expectations about what women should aspire to do after becoming mothers. These findings are consistent with prior research on gender differences in parenting experiences, where mothers found they were under pressure to be more involved in child-rearing and less involved in paid employment (Deutsch and Saxon 1998). These complexities – the social expectation that mothers should reconcile motherhood and work, without consequence (Harsch 2006) – contradicted our informants' experiences and desires to pursue their careers. It was

woven into their childcare choice and the consequences of that choice as the consumption experience continued.

My informants feel that they should be adept at managing role conflict between working and home life, yet maintain a constant concern that they were inadequately committed to their children and to their careers (Cuddy et al. 2004; Schwartz 1989). They feel that good mothering requires quality time, where full attention is devoted to children; anything less than full attention was insufficient mothering (Hochschild 2001). Often, working mothers are simultaneously dissatisfied with their performance of motherhood and their performance of the professional/employee role (Vincent and Ball 2006). Prior research has found that working mothers need to make concessions in family life and work to enable themselves, and their children, to function adequately (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach 2001). Working mothers, when returning to the workforce, become subjected to affectively mixed stereotypes; they often feel pressure to sacrifice the professional credibility needed to succeed in their careers for perceived motherly warmth (Cuddy et al. 2004). Many informants tried to manage this conflict through the childcare consumption choices that they made, but found that maternal role conflict and its management significantly complicated consumption (The VOICE Group 2010a, b). One outcome of this conflict was experienced negative emotions, such as perceived stress and anxiety.

Stress, Anxiety, and Reframing Choice

Cynthia, a 31-year-old physician who returned to work after a relatively short leave of four months, reports being very anxious as she tried to find a nanny for her son:

"it's been my number one source of stress. No question. I under-estimated how hard it would be." The need to choose a nanny under the time stress made the choice process very difficult. Cynthia found that the end date of her maternity leave loomed over her, and impeded her ability to choose a nanny. She had initially expected to find a nanny who could work the same long days that she does herself, but quickly became frustrated when she realized that her expectations could not be met:

> *I first posted our hours as 7am to 7pm, Monday to Friday. Which I then realized is absolutely insane, as you can't get somebody to do that… Nothing about it has been easy. I guess just the lack of – there are no candidates. It's been eye-opening and it's been frustrating. Very frustrating. And very emotional because this is your child.*

Many women described their stressful approaches to choosing potential childcare arrangements as their maternity leaves drew to an end, including Paula, who acknowledges that the time constraints arose partly because she had not planned ahead:

> *[We] are very spontaneous people, so there isn't a lot of planning to anything we do… We just thought, this is our fault, we didn't plan, we didn't know it takes eight months to get childcare… But it turned out that it is a really difficult thing to get childcare.*

Paula felt acute stress when she realized that daycare facilities had waiting lists that were too long to accommodate the deadline of her 50-week maternity leave.

In many cases, stress stemmed from a lack of understanding of how the system works, and being unprepared for the high cost of childcare. Women had feelings of anxiety and stress as they became aware of the waiting lists (often many months long)

and learned how to research various options. Our informants found it challenging to make choices about childcare under stress. Those who experienced the most stress were those who took shorter maternity leaves and those who admittedly did not begin the choice process soon enough. Further, our informants were concerned that the time pressure would push them to make choices that they would ultimately find unsatisfactory. In this context, then, consumption does not serve to facilitate the transition to working mother, nor does it permit new mothers to cope with the idealized conceptions of motherhood emphasized in the marketplace (The VOICE Group 2010a, b).

As stress complicates consumption, there is an unanswered question regarding the consequences for consumers of this stressful choice. Many informants were simply unable to defer choosing. As their maternity leaves drew to a close, they had to choose *something* in order to keep their jobs. Jennifer had put her name on waiting lists at ten daycare centers, but none had openings as her maternity leave ended. Because deferral was not an option, she began to consider alternatives she had previously found distasteful:

> *I found out one week before I went back to work that I got in to this spot. [Before*
>
> *that,] I had nothing. I had absolutely nothing. I was panicked… was going to start*
>
> *having to call around and really, really look at homecare.*

Cathy, a clerical worker with a young daughter, also feels that she did not have an option to defer choice. Her husband had recently been laid off, and she could not afford to stay home after the maternity benefits ran out. Intuitively, one would expect that outcomes of a stressful, forced choice situation would be less

74

satisfactory than those in a non-forced situation; the outcome should be preferred

if the chooser has the option to defer if he/she does not find a suitable alternative.

As informants struggled to establish consideration sets under stress, the choice

became further complicated by the fact that many of these short-listed alternatives were

simply not available. As time moved toward a deadline, the choice was increasingly taken

away from these women by the situation. The issue of waiting lists highlights this lack of

choice. For example, Beth expresses the frustration of having her choices externally

determined. She had been determined to use a daycare center, but came to realize that the

daycare centers had long waiting lists and, consequently, she would not be able to have

her choice of daycares:

> *Getting an infant spot is difficult. There aren't enough centers that will take a*
>
> *child that's 12 months. A lot of them are 16-18 months…So if you wait until your*
>
> *child is born [to get on a waiting list] you're probably already thirty down the list*
>
> *because people have called nine months before. There are no options there.*

Christine encountered a similar situation in her search for childcare. She and her

husband required longer hours for care than standard facilities would offer, and

she learned that there was only one option: "we didn't have other options for

daycares that would work. That's the only daycare in the whole city that would

work for us."

It is not only waiting lists for licensed daycare, but another external force, lack of

supply of nannies, that can reduce choice options for our informants. Cynthia, who

engaged in a long and frustrating search for a nanny, describes a fairly all-encompassing

decision process that ultimately is out of her control.

I thought there would be a lot more candidates. I didn't realize it would be this difficult. Especially in this economy. I figured that people would want jobs. … It seems we're sort of the epitome of the people who would have nannies. But [agency] doesn't seem to be able to give us many people to interview.

Paula tried to be discriminating in the beginning as well, but found it difficult because she wanted to return to work after six months:

We went through a process of months of being picky. We were trying to be very specific and picky about our care. But there were so many waiting lists that we got really frustrated…We just weren't finding any compromise with schedules or pricing or anything that would allow us to make a decision... We were screwed and we didn't prepare…

Ultimately, a part-time space became available in a home care located an hour from Paula's home. She and her husband juggled working from home and long commutes to make use of this provider because it was the only one that came available. In light of the prior research, we expected, a priori, that there would be unfavorable consequences associated with consumption outcomes that are not indicative of preference. That is, if the consumer does not exercise control by choosing the outcome from a list of alternatives, we would expect him/her to be unsatisfied with the outcome. (Note that this is different from research showing the consumers actually prefer less choice [e.g., Markus and Schwartz 2010]; in this situation most consumers actually had no real choice). But as will discuss below, this lack of a free choice, like the challenges of maternal role conflict, does not play out quite as one would expect from reading the prior literature.

Reframing the Situation: "A Choice I Can Live With"

Given many consumers' preference for making their own choices and their propensity to be less satisfied with externally determined outcomes (Botti and Iyengar 2006), it seems intuitive that mothers making choices about childcare would have negative reactions to outcomes that are determined solely by availability of a service provider, and I would expect informants' narratives to involve regret and disappointment. As I have shown, most informants did not choose their childcare in the same way that one typically thinks of consumers selecting their preferred product or service from a set of alternatives. While I did find that some mothers coped with unsatisfactory childcare while they searched for new care services, I also found that many informants adapted well to their outcomes in spite of the fact that these outcomes did not reflect true preference. Thus, it appears that not every outcome in a consumption context with constraints on the choice process requires coping. Consumers are actually capable of embracing outcomes in this context, even though these outcomes are not reflective of true preference, and I suggest that this indicates an ability to adapt to the outcomes of a sub-optimal choice process. In terms of an orientation to decision-making, individuals who seek a good enough outcome, rather than an optimal outcome, are generally more satisfied with their choices although they are less satisfied with the choice process (Iyengar, Wells, and Schwartz 2006).

Choice is inherently linked to individual preferences, and the act of making choices connects individuals to outcomes that he or she prefers over the alternatives (Markus and Schwartz 2010). And while reducing assortment can have positive consequences for consumers, including better decision making and better decision

77

outcomes (Botti and Iyengar 2006), there is an insufficient understanding of how individuals respond to consumption outcomes that are externally determined rather than personally chosen.

Although consumers indicate a preference for more choices and for making their own choices, Iyengar and Lepper (2000) demonstrated that both propensity to choose and satisfaction with the outcome were positively impacted when the choice set was smaller, suggesting that consumers can, in fact, be pleased when choices are limited. However, people like to make choices for themselves, and expect to be more satisfied with an outcome if it is self-chosen rather than externally determined (Botti and Iyengar 2004). For example, Botti and Iyengar (2004) found that choosers, in comparison to non-choosers, were more satisfied with the outcome. This is consistent with the lay assumption that the act of choosing for one's self will lead to greater satisfaction with the outcome (Botti and McGill 2006). The act of making one's own choice generally leads to positive outcomes and a favorable evaluation of the outcome (Payne et al. 1993). However, in highly consequential and unpleasant choice situations, consumers can be ambivalent toward control over their choices (Botti, Orfali, and Iyengar 2009). They do not like having to choose, but they also do not like to surrender the choice to another individual. This suggests that consumers are likely to be displeased with a choice situation where they evaluate alternatives and create a consideration set, but they ultimately do not determine the outcome.

The way that informants embraced the consumption outcome, although their choice process did not follow that of a typical consumer choice and the outcome itself was not reflective of their preference, is counter-intuitive; as informants began to actually

consume the outcome, they were able to evaluate their overall satisfaction with the childcare, and most concluded that they were actually pleased with the care. There remains, however, some degree of tension pertaining to what they consider a sub-optimal choice process. That is, the mothers were happy with the outcome, but unhappy with the process of arriving at the outcome. This leads them to a reframing of the choice process that is consistent with balance theory (Heider 1946, 1958). The choice process – characterized by constraints and lack of availability – and the childcare outcome constitute a unit relation that is in an unbalanced state: mothers had negative feelings toward the choice process, and positive feelings toward the childcare outcome. This unbalanced state is appears to be resolved by framing the choice process as a more typical (positive) process, which allowed mothers to arrive at a childcare outcome that is also positive. This reflects an ability to come to peace with a consumption situation they had little control over, in a highly consequential context.

Most informants raved about their childcare, yet this contrasted greatly with the ways they spoke of the choice process. Jennifer, who spoke at length of her frustrations in acquiring childcare, also spoke at length of her satisfaction with the one daycare center that became available: "I could not have asked for a better care facility… It's unbelievable. It's more than what I ever expected." Paula is equally pleased with the single homecare provider that was available when she returned to work, and she gushes about how the care provider had surpassed all her expectations: "she's been more than just care for us." Beth had initially wanted to use a daycare center, but had to resort to a homecare provider when none of the daycare centers had openings on their waiting lists. While she notes "I think it would be much different if there were just always spots

79

available" in the daycare centers, she was delighted with the homecare provider: "she has a fantastic program," and Beth "couldn't even imagine" not returning to the same provider after her second maternity leave. Similarly, Rachel had engaged in a long search process to avoid using her mother-in-law as a childcare provider. However, Rachel later expressed satisfaction with the outcome: "She runs a fantastic daycare," and "I don't think I could get any better in another home daycare." To reiterate, mothers did not adapt to the consumption if the care itself was unsatisfactory. If, however, the care was satisfactory, they were able to cognitively adjust to the idea that they did not ultimately choose the outcome.

As informants began the choice process, they constructed preferences, which were often clearly articulated. Some women were able to enact those preferences to some degree, but many others were not able to. In that sense, they did not really choose. Many informants had to expand their initial choice set well beyond their initial preferences. However, what is fascinating is that all informants still discuss this issue as a *choice*, which is entirely consistent with the North American cultural preoccupation with choosing and autonomy. For example, Paula described a frantic and stressful process by which she came to find childcare after she moved to a new city. A homecare provider had only offered a part-time spot for their daughter, and the location was hugely inconvenient for Paula and her husband to incorporate into their daily commutes. In short, the process did not resemble a true choice in any sense. However, as Paula discusses her use of the childcare, she clearly describes it in language that indicates perceived choice and control: "We *decided* on three days [a week] because we had to. That's all she had." Leslie, who sent her son to an informal homecare, also framed her consumption outcome as a choice,

despite the fact that she had tried to avoid homecare options "you just have no options. That's why I *chose* this one, because, you know, it was going to work for us." Informants' tendencies to frame the outcome as a choice was surprising, given their descriptions of the highly constrained choice process during earlier parts of the interviews. However, reframing the choice this way allows the choice process to become more positive, and more in balance with the positive experience of consuming the choice, and hence aids the moms in the adaptation to the outcome and ongoing consumption of the service.

At this point, I need to clearly distinguish this adaptation from coping. Two coping strategies in the extant literature that appear to be relevant for consumers of childcare include accommodation and positive thinking, but neither explains the behavior we see here. *Accommodation* is a confrontative strategy. It involves behavioral changes (e.g., new or modified routines) to conform to an acquired technological possession (Mick and Fournier (1998). This form of coping does not account for our informants' distinct satisfaction with their childcare outcomes because accommodation involves the individual being conscious that he/she does not actually like the possession or the emotional effects of consuming it. Another identified coping strategy, *positive thinking*, is a form of active coping that entails conscious reconstrual of the stressor (Duhachek 2005). The consumer consciously focuses on the positive aspects of the stressor and looks at the bright side of things; thus becoming less adversely affected by it. This coping strategy does not account for our informants' experiences either, because they did not have motivation to reconstrue an unsatisfactory childcare outcome into a satisfactory one. That is, extant coping strategies fall short of explaining our phenomenon, by implying

that the best possible consequence of an outcome that does not reflect personal preference is mitigated negative emotion. My informants, however, express positive reactions to individual outcomes.

The mothers in my sample found themselves pleased with their respective childcare outcomes, and therefore did not have to engage in coping. Rather, they had to resolve the unbalanced state created by their positive feelings toward the childcare and their negative feelings toward the choice process[2].

Subjective well-being is, essentially, happiness and life satisfaction, marked by morale and positive emotions (Diener 2009). Adaptability can play an important and functional role in subjective well-being by allowing individuals to thrive under adverse personal circumstances (Heidrich and Ryff 1993; Seery et al. 2010). Our cultural conceptions of well-being are linked to freedom of choice; individual choice is paramount in North American cultural, particularly for college-educated people (Markus and Schwartz 2010). Choice plays an integral role in our lives due to our cultural preoccupation with autonomy and individual agency (Bellah et al. 2008), and consumers are generally uncomfortable with situations wherein they are not able to exercise choice and control. Innformants, however, were able to adapt to their situations in such a way that their happiness and overall stress levels were greatly improved. Christine articulates this most concisely as she talks about her nanny: "She is probably the key reason why going back to work has been palatable, because I'm not worried about [daughter]." "It's like I've been able to be duplicated!" These sentiments contrast starkly with the earlier

---

[2] In contrast, the two mothers in our sample who were not pleased with their initial childcare outcomes engaged in coping in the short term, while they revisited the search for childcare. These mothers had negative sentiments toward both the choice process *and* the childcare outcome, and therefore were not in an unbalanced state.

portions of the interview, where Christine stated a clear aversion to nannies, and it appears that her overall well-being has improved in spite of the negativity of the choice process.

I can tie these findings to recent developments in consumer research that have shown that more choice is not always better, and that there is a complex relationship between subjective well-being and choice (Markus and Schwartz 2010). "There is evidence that whereas choice is good, more choice is not better, at least under some circumstances. Choice overload can produce paralysis, poor decisions, and dissatisfaction even with good decisions" (Markus and Schwartz 2010, 351). An overwhelming assortment of choices can result in regret, dissatisfaction, and otherwise be a detriment to subjective well-being (Mick, Broniarczyk, and Haidt 2004) and individuals who experience moderately adverse circumstances – such as highly constrained and consequential situations – may also experience improved well-being as they adapt to their situations (Seery et al. 2010).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this study, I examined the complexities of a highly consequential and yet highly constrained consumption context from the perspective of the consumers immersed in the choice and its ongoing consumption. My informants experienced difficult choices, and the consumption outcomes were largely determined by external circumstances rather than by their own preference. Interestingly, I found that instead of merely coping with outcomes, my informants reframed the choice, and its outcomes, in such a way that their well-being was improved. This is finding is in line with recent arguments by Markus and

83

Schwartz (2010, 352) who suggest that well-being can be achieved by adapting to circumstances where choice is not possible.

Based on an understanding of how consumers make choices and their preference for choosing, I expected that informants would be displeased because they did not actually select the outcome from among the alternatives; we expected that consumers would employ coping strategies to allow them to mitigate the stress and negative emotion associated with a consumption outcome not reflective of their preferences. Interestingly, however, I find that consumers can actually be very happy with the outcomes. This is counter-intuitive, because informants experienced significant frustration with the choice process. I suggest that this satisfaction is not a form of coping. Rather, it reflects an individual's ability to adapt to a sub-optimal consumption process, wherein the individual was ultimately not able to exercise control over the consumption outcome.

The satisfaction associated with the outcome is a form of consumer adaptability. The individual modifies herself to the outcome in such a way that overall subjective well-being is enhanced. Informants were capable of accommodating the outcome in their behaviors, and then adapting to the outcome on an emotional and psychological level in a way that contributes to their overall happiness. Thus, I demonstrate that adapting is very different from coping, and is linked to resilience and overall well-being. This adaptability is especially surprising given that our informants found themselves naïve to the challenges of consuming in this context. Many informants expressed frustration that they were unprepared for the choice process, and wished that there was more community support available for mothers choosing childcare. The ability of these mothers to adapt to their childcare outcomes is remarkable, once we consider that most entered the choice

84

process believing they would be able to choose a childcare provider in the same way that they made other major household decisions.

If informants were merely coping with their childcare outcomes or their frustrations with their lack of true choice, they would have continued to pursue their initial preferences, and they would have switched childcare providers at the first opportunity[3]. The highly involving nature of the context prohibits mere coping, especially over the long term, and the middle-class mothers in our study cannot merely cope with the possibility that their children are in poor quality childcare.

It is instructive to compare these findings with prior research on constrained choice and consumer satisfaction. I discovered no real differences in consumption satisfaction between women with varying degrees of control over the choice situation, consistent with choice work on less-differentiated options (Botti and McGill 2006), and my research is also supportive of work that shows individuals encountering a smaller choice set are more likely to be satisfied with their choices (Iyengar and Lepper 2000). However, I extend this work by showing that even when the choice options are limited, consumers can still be satisfied with the outcome. All of these childcare choices are made under the clock of a limited maternity leave, and thus our finding of smaller choice sets is consistent with research showing stress and time constraints on choice can result in smaller consideration sets (Weenig and Maarleveld 2002). Of course, I broaden the concept of a time constraint here, where it is measured over months, rather than minutes.

Recent research has suggested that the study of consumers has much to gain from a focus on mothers and motherhood as integral aspects of consumer culture (Cook 2008;

---

[3] I did find evidence of coping for Erin and Paula, who reported that their initial childcare outcomes were unacceptable. These mothers quickly acquired different childcare services with which they were satisfied.

The VOICE Group 2010a, b), and this research has some important implications for understanding how mothers, and families, consume. A woman's role in the household becomes particularly important during times of family transition (e.g., the end of a maternity leave), and consumption enactments can both facilitate and complicate her ability to create family (Hogg, Curasi, and Maclaran 2004) and to shape her identity (The VOICE Group 2010a; Thomsen and Sørensen 2006). With my focus on maternal role conflict, this work sheds light on these processes, and responds to recent calls for research on family consumption (Epp and Price 2008).

One limitation of this work is the narrow focus on women of similar demographic profile. It is of course likely that class differences will play a role in how mothers respond to their childcare service providers. In this study, I show that the highly consequential nature of the choice prohibited coping with a bad outcome. Consumers who had the material resources to change their situation did so. Future research could expand our investigation; I suspect that a study of mothers with lower levels of social and economic resources would demonstrate different consequences of poor consumption outcomes. Mothers with fewer resources at their disposal may have to adapt and cope with negative consequences differently (Stephens et al. 2009).

This research also makes more practical contributions, as the need for childcare has implications for women's ability to participate in the workforce and to balance the needs of work life and family life. Indeed, challenges associated with childcare are the best predictors for work-family conflict (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach 2001). Work life – whether temporarily on hold during a maternity leave or modified for an indeterminate amount of time after maternity leave – plays an important role in

motherhood. Women's experiences with motherhood, particularly how they manage challenges of life with an infant, are shaped by their labor force experiences; women with more material and social resources are better able to meet their own expectations of intensive motherhood practices (Fox 2009). Interestingly, the psychological well-being of working mothers is generally better than non-working mothers, an effect that can be attributed to the ability of family and work to act as emotional buffers against each other (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach 2001). However, prior research has shown that trying to meet the demands of two competing jobs – motherhood and career – can have a negative impact on well-being (Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach 2001).

In addition to offering an empirical account of pervasive discomfort in ongoing, routine consumption, this research illuminates a deeper phenomenon: childcare is a marketplace solution that was created to liberate women, but it continues to constrain them. The women's liberation movement argued that reliable institutional childcare was necessary for women to engage in the workforce and – broadly speaking – urged women to pursue self-fulfillment through work and study rather than through intensive motherhood (Clarke-Stewart 1993). Women were encouraged to find paid employment that would foster some degree of financial self-sufficiency or provide intrinsic rewards. Childcare, in its various forms, enables maternal employment, including the employment of women who provide childcare (Collins 2009). However, Western societies continue to view marketplace intrusions into the sacred space of the family as a form of moral corruption (Zelizer 2005). Thus, non-maternal childcare continues to be problematic for the women it was intended to liberate:

When the young activists of the '60s and '70s had imagined what life would be

like for the liberated woman… They had expected that men would automatically

do their share of household chores. And they believed the government would start

providing early child care the same way it provided public education. They had

not considered the possibly that society might remain pretty much the same as

always, and simply open the door for women to join the race for success while

taking care of their private lives as best they could. (Collins 2009, 304)

From a public policy angle, our Canadian context permits a vivid demonstration of an incredibly constrained choice set. In this, I echo the calls of child care workers, advocates, and Canadian parents: there is simply not enough viable daycare capacity in certain parts of Canada. Based on both anecdotal and U.S. Census data, we believe a similar problem of supply exists in parts of the U.S. Policy options that encourage and create more child care options and access would be welcomed by many parents. This could include policy and tax incentives that make it less onerous/more attractive for businesses to include on-site daycare centers. This could include more government-subsidized spots for lower income groups. Currently in Canada, most daycare centers operate with a certain ratio of fully-paying consumers and subsidized consumers. However, there are caps on how many subsidized spots are available, given government funding. In addition to more funding for spaces in non-profit centers, there could also be a public option, such as the elementary school system, that provides low cost infant and toddler care.

There are also regulatory issues concerning the timing of daycare center operations. While the limits on hours children should spend in commercial care (which

differ depending on jurisdiction but are commonly nine hours per day) are justified, there is typically rigidity in terms of which nine hours these will be. As recent media reports have highlighted, economic recession means more North Americans are taking on more than one job, or shift work if necessary, to keep the family afloat. This creates a new need for non-traditional commercial childcare, such as 24 hour daycare centers (Tavernise 2012). I certainly saw some informants simply unable to match the hours of a daycare with the hours they needed to work. (In several comments to these media reports, several posters pointed out that if society wants 24 hour shopping, hugely expanded bank hours, and other modern conveniences, we have to also recognize that these employees may also be parents of young children).

As a reminder, the main research questions were: What difficulties emerge from the different roles mothers play, and the tensions between their expectations and their experiences? How do consumers reconstruct what was a constrained decision process into a free choice after the fact? While some of the complex aspects we uncovered do not easily lend themselves to a policy-driven solution, some certainly do. More regulated and licensed access, and more flexible regulations as to timing, could minimize the negative choice process. As more women struggle to maintain a professional role in addition to a mother role, policies that make the choice process less negative will also mitigate the conflict mother/professionals feel, and they extent to which they need to adapt to an ongoing, important, consumption service.

REFERENCES

Baines, Donna (2009), "Reshaping Gender and the Labour Force: A Comparison of Social and Industrial Policy Impacts in the Australian and Canadian Community Sectors," in *Whose Flexibility? Families, Firms, Governments and Conflicting Agendas*, University of Guelph: Centre for Families, Work & Well-Being.

Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton (2008), *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Berry, John W. and D. L. Sam (1997), "Acculturation and Adaptation," in *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, ed. John W. Berry, Marshall H. Segall and Cigdem Kagitcibasi, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Bettman, James R., Mary Frances Luce, and John W. Payne (1998), "Constructive Consumer Choice Processes," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (December), 187-217.

Bezanson, Kate (2009), "Gender, Social Reproduction and Work-Life Balance," in *Whose Flexibility? Families, Firms, Governments and Conflicting Agendas*, University of Guelph: Centre for Families, Work & Well-Being.

Botti, Simona and Sheena S. Iyengar (2004), "The Psychological Pleasure and Pain of Choosing: When People Prefer Choosing at the Cost of Subsequent Outcome Satisfaction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87 (3), 312-26.

--- (2006), "The Dark Side of Choice: When Choice Impairs Social Welfare," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 25 (1), 24-38.

Botti, Simona and Ann L. McGill (2006), "When Choosing Is Not Deciding: The Effect of Perceived Responsibility on Satisfaction," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (September), 211-19.

Botti, Simona, Kristina Orfali, and Sheena S. Iyengar (2009), "Tragic Choices: Autonomy and Emotional Responses to Medical Decisions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (October), 337-52.

Clarke-Stewart, Alison (1993), *Daycare*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Clarke-Stewart, Alison and Virginia D. Allhusen (2005), *What We Know About Childcare*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Collins, Gail (2009), *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*, New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Cook, Daniel Thomas (2008), "The Missing Child in Consumption Theory," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8 (2), 219-43.

Cuddy, Amy J. C., Susan T. Fiske, and Peter Glick (2004), "When Professionals Become Mothers, Warmth Doesn't Cut the Ice," *Journal of Social Issues*, 60 (4), 701-18.

Deutsch, Francine M. and Susan E. Saxon (1998), "The Double Standard of Praise and Criticism for Mothers and Fathers," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 22, 665-83.

Dhar, Ravi (1997), "Consumer Preference for a No-Choice Option," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (September), 215-31.

Diener, Ed (2009), "Subjective Well-Being," in *The Science of Well-Being*, ed. Ed Diener, New York: Springer.

Duhachek, Adam (2005), "Coping: A Multidimensional, Hierarchical Framework of Responses to Stressful Consumption Episodes," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (June), 41-53.

Duncan, Simon, Rosalind Edwards, Tracey Reynolds, and Pam Alldred (2003), "Mothers and Child Care: Policies, Values and Theories," in *Children and Society*, DOI 10.1002/CHI.800.

Edland, Anne and Ola Svenson (1993), "Judgment and Decision Making under Time Pressure: Studies and Findings," in *Time Pressure and Stress in Human Judgment and Decision Making*, ed. Ola Svenson and John A. Maule, New York: Plenum Press.

Epp, Amber M. and Linda L. Price (2008), "Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (June), 50-70.

Fischer, Eileen and Stephen J. Arnold (1990), "More Than a Labor of Love: Gender Roles and Christmas Gift Shopping," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (December), 333-45.

Fox, Bonnie (2009), "The Long Arm of the Job... Rocking the Cradle," in *Whose Flexibility? Families, Firms, Governments and Conflicting Agendas*, University of Guelph: Centre for Families, Work & Well-Being.

Fredriksen-Goldsen, Karen I. and Andrew E. Scharlach (2001), *Families and Work*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Friedan, Betty (1997), *The Feminine Mystique*, New York: W.W.Norton & Company.

Giddens, Anthony (1993), *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Harsch, Herta E. (2006), "Motherhood and Work," in *Motherhood in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Alcira Mariam Alizade, New York: H. Karnac Ltd. .

Heider, Fritz (1946), "Attitudes and Cognitive Organization," *Psychological Review*, 51, 358-74.

--- (1958), *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, New York: Wiley.

Heidrich, Susan M. and Carol D. Ryff (1993), "The Role of Social Comparisons Processes in the Psychological Adaptation of Elderly Adults," *Journal of Gerontology*, 48 (3), 127-36.

Hochschild, Arlie (2012), *The Outsourced Self*, New York: Metropolitan Books.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell (1989), *The Second Shift*, New York: Avon Books.

--- (2001), "Eavesdropping Children, Adult Deals, and Cultures of Care," in *Working Families: The Transformation of the American Home*, ed. Rosanna Hertz and Nancy L. Marshall, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Hogg, Margaret K., Carolyn Folkman Curasi, and Pauline Maclaran (2004), "The (Re-) Configuration of Production and Consumption in Empty Nest Households/Families," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 7 (3), 239-59.

Huff, Aimee Dinnin and June Cotte (2010), "It's Been My Number One Source of Stress: The Decision to Pay for Care," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 37, ed. Margaret C. Campbell, Jeff Inman and Rik Pieters, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 729-30.

Iyengar, Sheena S. and Mark R. Lepper (2000), "When Choice Is Demotivating: Can One Desire Too Much of a Good Thing?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79 (6), 995-1006.

Iyengar, Sheena S., Rachael E. Wells, and Barry Schwartz (2006), "Doing Better but Feeling Worse: Looking for the "Best" Job Undermines Satisfaction," *Psychological Science*, 17 (2), 143-50.

Laughlin, Lynda (2010), "Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 2005 and Summer 2006," in *Current Population Reports*, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Leach, Penelope (2009), *Child Care Today*, New York: Random House

Luce, Mary Frances (1998), "Choosing to Avoid: Coping with Negatively Emotion-Laden Consumer Decisions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (March), 409-33.

Luce, Mary Frances, James R. Bettman, and John W. Payne (2001), "Emotional Decisions: Tradeoff Difficulty and Coping in Consumer Choice," in *Monographs of the Journal of Consumer Research*, ed. Deborah Roedder John, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

--- (2003), "Minimizing Negative Emotion as a Decision Goal: Investigating Emotional Trade-Off Difficulty," in *The Why of Consumption: Contemporary Perspectives on Consumer Motives, Goals, and Desires*, ed. S. Ratneshwar, David Glen Mick and Cynthia Huffman, New York: Routledge.

Lundgren, Lena M., Jennifer Fleischer-Cooperman, Robert Schneider, and Therese Fitzgerald (2001), "Work, Family, and Gender in Medicine: How Do Dual-Earners Decide Who Should Work Less?," in *Working Families: The Transformation of the American Home*, ed. Rosanna Hertz and Nancy L. Marshall, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Markus, Hazel Rose and Barry Schwartz (2010), "Does Choice Mean Freedom and Well-Being?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (August), 344-55.

Maule, John A., G. Robert J. Hockey, and L. Bdzola (2000), "Effects of Time-Pressure on Decision-Making under Uncertainty: Changes in Affective State and Information Processing Strategy," *Acta Psychologica*, 104, 283-301.

McCracken, Grant (1988), *The Long Interview*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mick, David Glen, Susan M. Broniarczyk, and Jonathon Haidt (2004), "Choose, Choose, Choose, Choose, Choose, Choose, Choose: Emerging and Prospective Research on the Deleterious Effects of Living in Consumer Hyperchoice," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 52 (2), 207-11.

Mick, David Glen and Susan Fournier (1998), "Paradoxes of Technology: Consumer Cognizance, Emotions, and Coping Strategies," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (September), 123-43.

Mittelstaedt, John D., Charles R. Duke, and Robert A. Mittelstaedt (2009), "Health Care Choices in the United States and the Constrained Consmer: A Marketing Systems Perspective on Access and Assortment in Health Care," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 28 (1), 95-101.

Moschis, George P. (2007), "Stress and Consumer Behavior," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 35, 430-44.

Pavia, Teresa M. and Marlys J. Mason (2004), "The Reflexive Relationship between Consumer Behavior and Adaptive Coping," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (September), 441-54.

Payne, John W. and James R. Bettman (2004), "Walking with the Scarecrow: The Information-Processing Approach to Decision Research," in *Blackwell Handbook of Judgment and Decision Making*, ed. Derek J. Koehler and Nigel Harvey, Maldern, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Payne, John W., James R. Bettman, Elouise Coupey, and Eric J. Johnson (1992), "A Constructive Process View of Decision Making: Multiple Strategies in Judgment and Choice," *Acta Psychologica*, 80 (1-3), 107-41.

Payne, John W., Jamres R. Bettman, and Eric J. Johnson (1993), *The Adaptive Decision Maker*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Pieters, Rik and Marcel Zeelenberg (2005), "On Bad Decisions and Deciding Badly: When Intention-Behavior Inconsistency Is Regrettable," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97 (1), 18-30.

Raghunathan, Rajagopal, Michel T. Pham, and Kim P. Corfman (2006), "Informational Properties of Anxiety and Sadness, and Displaced Coping," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (March), 596-601.

Richardson, Glenn E. (2002), "The Metatheory of Resilience and Resiliency," *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58 (3), 307-21.

Scarr, Sandra (1998), "American Child Care Today," *American Psychologist*, 53 (2), 95-108.

Schor, Juliet B. (1992), *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, New York: BasicBooks.

Schwartz, Felice N. (1989), "Management Women and the New Facts of Life," *Harvard Business Review*, 67, 65-76.

Searle, Wendy and Colleen Ward (1990), "The Prediction of Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment During Cross-Cultural Transitions," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14 (4), 449-64.

Seery, Mark D., Alison E. Holman, and Roxane Cohen Silver (2010), "Whatever Does Not Kill Us: Cumulative Lifetime Adversity, Vulnerability, and Resilience," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99 (6), 1025-41.

Spiggle, Susan (1994), "Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 491-503.

Stephens, Nicole M., MarYam G. Hamedani, Hazel Rose Markus, Hilary B. Bergsieker, and Liyam Eloul (2009), "Why Did They 'Choose' to Stay? Perspectives of Hurricane Katrina Observers and Survivors," *Psychological Science*, 20 (7), 878-86.

Tavernise, Sabrina (2012), "Day Care Centers Adapt to Round-the-Clock Demand," *New York Times*, January 15, 2012.

The VOICE Group (2010a), "Buying into Motherhood? Problematic Consumption and Ambivalence in Transitional Phases," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 13 (4), 373-97.

--- (2010b), "Motherhood, Marketization, and Consumer Vulnerability," *Journal of Macromarketing*, 30 (4), 384-97.

Thompson, Craig J. (1996), "Caring Consumers: Gendered Consumption Meanings and the Juggling Lifestyle," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (March), 388-407.

Thompson, Craig J., William B. Locander, and Howard R. Pollio (1990), "The Lived Meaning of Free Choice: An Existential-Phenomenological Description of Everyday Consumer Experiences of Contemporary Married Women," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (December), 346-61.

Thompson, Craig J., Howard R. Pollio, and William B Locander (1994), "The Spoken and the Unspoken: A Hermeneutic Approach to Understanding the Cultural Viewpoints That Underlie Consumers' Expressed Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 432-52.

Thomsen, Thyra Uth and Elin Brandi Sørensen (2006), "The First Four-Wheeled Status Symbol: Pram Consumption as a Vehicle for the Construction of Motherhood Identity," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 22 (907-927).

Vincent, Carol and Stephen J. Ball (2001), "A Market in Love? Choosing Pre-School Childcare," *British Educational Research Journal*, 27 (5), 633-51.

--- (2006), *Childcare, Choice and Class Practices*, New York: Routledge.

Walsh, Michael , Paula M. Fitzgerald, Tami Gurley-Calvez, and Adam Pellillo (2011), "Active Versus Passive Choice: Evidence from a Public Health Care Redesign," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 30 (2), 191-202.

Weenig, Mieneke W. H. and Marleen Maarleveld (2002), "The Impact of Time Constraint on Information Search Strategies in Complex Choice Tasks," *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 23, 689-702.

Yi, Sunghwan and Hans Baumgartner (2004), "Coping with Negative Emotions in Purchase-Related Situations," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14 (3), 303-17.

Zeelenberg, Marcel, Wilco W. van Dijk, Antony S. R. Manstead, and Joop van der Pligt (2000), "On Bad Decisions and Disconfirmed Expectancies: The Psychology of Regret and Disappointment," *Cognition and Emotion*, 14 (4), 521-41.

Zelizer, Viviana (1985), *Pricing the Priceless Child*, New York: Basic Books.

--- (2005), *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

TABLE 1
Informant Profiles (Essay 1)

INFORMANT	DETAILS	CHILDREN	CHILDCARE ARRANGEMENT
Jessica	29, married, teacher	son (2) and son (12 mos)	kids going to mother-in-law's
Cynthia	35, commonlaw, lawyer	son (4 months)	searching for nanny
Rachel	31, married, legal assistant	son (6 months)	kids going to mother-in-law's
Paula	26, married, manager	daughter (12 mos)	daughter in home daycare, PT
Jennifer	34, married, teacher	daughter (2) and son (14 mos)	kids in daycare facility, FT
Sandra	42, married, clerical job	son (4) and son (3)?	returning to work after 5 yrs
Beth	33, married, therapist	son (2) and son (8 mos)	2nd mat leave ends in 4 mos
Cathy	30, married, clerical job	daughter (3)	husband laid off; looking for care
Tracy	34, married, clerical job	daughter (2) and pregnant	daughter in homecare
Christine	31, married, doctor	daughter (9mos)	hired nanny
Sue	32, married, manage family business	son (16 mos) and pregnant	son in homecare
Erin	36, married, therapist	son (6 years) and daughter (19 months)	kids in homecare; Erin now off work fulltime
Leslie	31, married, technician	son (15mos)	son in homecare
Lauren	32, married, manager	daughter (18mos) and pregnant	son in daycare PT
Joanne	32, married, accountant	son (5 years), son (3 yrs), son (18 mos)	kids in school and/or homecare

CHAPTER 3: THE INSTRUMENTAL ROLE OF CONSUMPTION IN THE PRODUCTION OF FAMILY IDENTITY ACROSS HOUSEHOLDS AND GENERATIONS

In this essay, I explore the ways that contemporary North American families enact family identity in the late stage of the family life cycle, which I conceptualize as an elderly parent requiring some degree of daily care. The need for and subsequent use of elder care services marks a life transition that is both emotionally and operationally challenging for families because it signals an evolution in the family; older members become more dependent on others for daily living in a process that is often marked by a sense of sadness and reflection for their adult children (Greenberg 1989; Reuss, Dupuis, and Whitfield 2005). In essence, an elderly family member's use of elder care services has an impact on the family as a whole, and influences how family life is continued and performed.

According to the 2011 Canadian Census, more than 500,000 seniors in Canada live in collective dwellings such as assisted living facilities or nursing homes. The vast majority of seniors have children, many of whom play an instrumental role in the sourcing of care services for their parents (Connidis, Rosenthal, and McMullin 1996; Marks 1998), but little is known about the family's engagement with the marketplace or how the family functions across households.

Prior research on the use of elder care services has focused on the recipient of care, the informal care-givers within the family, or professional care-givers. This large body of work, while important, does not adequately theorize the collective experience of

relying on the marketplace for an elderly family member's daily needs, which often characterizes the last, late stage of the family life cycle. Further, consumer research on family life cycle has adopted a household focus, and given little attention to the ways that family is enacted when members live in different households, or the ways that consumption is used across the family during the late stage of the life cycle. Thus, questions remain about how families experience the elderly generation's need for daily care, the role of consumption in this stage of the life cycle, and how family identity is enacted beyond the boundaries of the household.

I argue that consumption plays an instrumental role in family identity enactments during this stage of the life cycle. More than a symbolic resource, the marketplace functions as a conduit through which the family performs itself in the form of care-giving and living arrangements that do not make one adult dependent on another family member. In this paper, I focus on the experiences of families whose oldest member is making the transition to use commercial elder care services. I seek to address the oversights in current literature by exploring the ways that family identity is enacted when family structure shifts and when the individual members maintain separate living arrangements.

Building on the sensitizing theory developed by Epp and Price (2008), I reveal the nature of the role of consumption in family identity enactment across household boundaries. In doing so, I theorize the relationships between consumption, family identity, and family life cycle, and I expand on current literature on family consumption. First, I reveal that the marketplace (i.e., commercial elder care services) is used instrumentally to perform family. Prior research has suggested that marketplace resources

are used symbolically (Epp and Price 2008), but I demonstrate that they can be used as a legitimate way to provide requisite care to an elderly parent while also maintaining independent living arrangements for the parent and adult children. Second, I reveal that everyday consumption, however minor in scale or scope, not only plays an important role in identity maintenance for the elderly but also plays an even more critical role for adult children, who see shopping and leisure activities as ways to ensure continuity of family identity and symbolic markers of their parent(s)'s independence. Third, I expose the ways in which time consumption is altered in this stage of family life cycle to preserve family identity; family time is renegotiated to prioritize social visits with elderly parents, time for managing care services, and time for negotiating with siblings on issues surrounding parental care. Together, these developments indicate that at this stage of family life cycle family identity enactments are fundamentally dependent on the marketplace, both in the form of care services and everyday shopping, and that intra-familial social interactions are prioritized.

The goal of this research is to understand the role of consumption in the enactment of family identity through the late stage of the family life cycle. In doing so, I build on a growing body of work that explores family consumption (Epp and Price 2008, 2010), older consumers (Schau, Gilly, and Wolfinbarger 2009), and the ways that family identity is enacted using a combination of internal production and consumption of market-offerings (Moisio, Arnould, and Price 2004). I also offer an extension on research on consumption during times of transition (The VOICE Group 2010), and as it relates to family life cycle (Wilkes 1995). I begin by reviewing relevant literature and highlighting the gaps in our understanding of family identity and consumption during family

99

transitions. I then describe my approach to empirically addressing th research questions. Next, I present my findings, organized around three themes, which, together, constitute a theory of how consumption is used to enact identity in this dynamic context. The paper concludes with a discussion relating our findings to extant literature, identification of limitations and avenues for future research, and suggestions of public policy implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Late Stage of Family Life Cycle

Theories of family life cycle have appeared in consumer research for many years. Family life cycle refers, broadly, to the stages associated with new roles and relationships within the family, such as marriage or divorce, birth of the first child, or retirement from the workforce (Wilkes 1995). Life cycle stages are associated with different consumption patterns, as changes in income and expenditures impact the family's lifestyle (Schaninger and Danko 1993). Research on family life cycle in consumer research has focused on the household, and on families with young children. Relatively little is known about consumption in the last stage in the life cycle, which is defined as an older individual, with or without a spouse, living in a household without other family members (Wilkes 1995). Therefore, questions remain about the role of consumption for families across households at this stage of the life cycle, because it is characterized by significant changes in the cognitive and/or physical abilities of an older family member, such that his or her day-to-day living becomes challenging.

Oldness can be determined by chronological age, or by measures of physical health or social engagement (Moschis and Mathur 1993). As individuals age from old to

100

elderly, they process information more slowly, experience declines in memory and judgment, and are more prone to distractions in the decision context (John and Cole 1986; Law, Hawkins, and Craik 1998; Yoon 1997). Physical abilities are often compromised, resulting in decreased mobility and stability for completing daily activities. Older people may also come to assume a subject position, where they are portrayed as vulnerable, passive, weak, and nearing the end of life (Barnhart 2009). At this stage of the life cycle, elderly people are often part of a network comprised of family members, friends, and paid care-givers, and this network facilitates day-to-day consumption (Barnhart 2009). Spouses, if they are able, and middle-aged children take the lead in this network (Connidis et al. 1996) but, often, some form of commercial care is required as demands exceed the family's resources to perform care-giving tasks (Penrod and Dellasga 1998).

Consumer researchers have demonstrated that consumption plays a critical role in the identity work of the elderly. Even in old age, consumption allows for identity maintenance by necessitating independence, choice, and engagement with the marketplace (Kang and Ridgway 1996; Schau et al. 2009). For example, the directed and deliberate disposition of special possessions allows elderly people to exercise agency at a time in life when cognitive and/or physical decline preclude the exercising of agency through many other avenues (Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000). There is, however, a lack of understanding of how consumption facilitates the performance of family across households and between multiple adult members during this stage of the family life cycle. This is of interest to consumer researchers as contemporary families are increasingly geographically dispersed, elderly members are living longer, and many different forms of commercial care being used (Connidis 2010).

Family Identity

The concept of family identity is relevant to the study of family transitions and consumption because it influences, challenges, and is influenced by family life cycle (Bennett, Wolin, and McAvity 1988). Family is "produced" as the family collective and the individual members within communicate with each other and with non-members (DeVault 2000), and this production of family constitutes family identity enactments. Family identity is the family's subjective sense of itself, which shapes and is shaped by the ways that family is performed or "done" by its members (Bennett et al. 1988). It consists of three components: structure, which relates to the boundaries and hierarchy of membership; generational orientation, which encompasses the family's understanding of the continuously evolving nature of its past, present and future; and family character, which involves the nature of everyday life and includes the family's tastes, values, and shared practices (Epp and Price 2008). Family identity influences the ways that families exchange goods and services within the family network and the ways that they consume goods and services from the marketplace, especially during times of transition (Fellerman and Debevec 1993; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991). Indeed, consumption is heavily implicated in family identity work; products, services, and brands are used as resources by individuals and groups within families, as well as by the family collective, to perform family (Epp and Price 2008).

Family identity shifts and flows across generations, and the identity of a family created through marriage and children can be very different from the identity of a family in which one was reared (Bennett et al. 1988). Heritage and past-orientation play a key

role in the continuity of a family-of-origin as its members age and move apart, and solidarity is enacted by staying in touch and focusing on the historical nature of relationships (Bennett et al. 1988; Connidis 2010). In particular, sibling relationships are important in keeping a family connected beyond the household (Rosenthal 1985), but our field has an insufficient understanding of how family identity is enacted when members live in separate households.

In the context of providing care for an elderly parent, family structure becomes challenged and renegotiated as the historical hierarchy shifts to account for the increase in decision-making authority of adult children. The generational orientation is at once past-oriented and future-oriented: for the family-of-origin (i.e., the elderly parent and adult children), identity enactments revolve around a historical family identity, while adult children and their respective nuclear families seek to prioritize their own family identity through a future-orientation in spite of increasing demands from their family-of-origin (Bennett et al. 1988; Brody 2004). Family character may involve norms of filial obligation, or the nature of relationships between each sibling and the parent (Connidis et al. 1996). Love and care constitute a central theme in the production of family; however, the production and distribution of love and care within the family are often marked by conflict, negotiation, and power imbalances (Ekstrom 2004). Thus, the transition to the late stage of the family life cycle can challenge family identity and cause conflict for adult children who draw on identities related to their family of origin and their respective nuclear families.

Family Consumption

Research on family consumption has tended to focus on outcomes related to decision making (Cotte and Wood 2004), individual identity work (The VOICE Group 2010), or the consumer socialization of children (John 1999). Other work has examined changes in consumption through the family lifecycle (Moisio et al. 2004), allocation of family time (Epp and Price 2012), and special family possessions (Price et al. 2000). However, foregrounding market-based consumption often comes at the expense of understanding how family is produced internally, as a function of consumption practices, domestic work, and emotional labour (Warde 1990). Epp and Price's (2008) more recent work has developed a framework for understanding the performance of family as a collective endeavor, the role of consumption in enactments of family identity, and the identity interplay between individuals, groups, and the family collective. This framework identifies disruptions and transitions as potential moderators to the enactment of family identity, but to date there has been no empirical examination of families' consumption practices after major family or household transitions (Commuri and Gentry 2000). Further, research on families and consumption is focused on nuclear families within households, leaving a gap in our knowledge about how family identity is enacted across multiple households and generations (Murphy and Staples 1979).

Families And Elder Care

The need for an elderly family member to receive regular, daily care-giving represents an important family transition and is a necessary progression in the life cycle (Greenberg 1989). While many elderly individuals are able to live into their 90s without daily care-giving, there are many others who could not survive without this type of care.

In many cases, decisions about elder care cannot be delayed or avoided, creating a sense of urgency, panic, and loss across the family (Dellasega and Mastrian 1995; Krause, Grant, and Long 1999; Reuss et al. 2005). The situation brings together any adult children, who are often geographically dispersed, and have differing levels of resources to offer. Siblings typically expect to share responsibilities and work related to parental care (Connidis 2010), however, their individual identities can influence motivation and ability to be involved in managing parental care (Silverstein, Conroy, and Gans 2008). In this context, siblings play an ambivalent role; they can facilitate informal care-giving by sharing work among themselves, communicate with each other to cope emotionally with the family transition, complicate the choice process when preferences and motivations differ, and/or perpetuate negative family dynamics (Huff and Cotte 2012; Rodgers 1997).

The elderly parent's agency becomes problematic for family members concerned with his/her safety; adult children often struggle to identify the point at which their parent is no longer safe living on his/her own, which is also often the point at which a professional care service is enlisted (Barnhart and Penaloza 2009). As safety is compromised – through cognitive and/or physical decline – agency is, often, eventually transferred to others in the family in a process that is typically complex and uncomfortable (Barnhart and Penaloza 2009; Brody 2004). Adult children must then negotiate the challenges of acting as a surrogate decision-maker to their parent(s), managing conflict between siblings, and the continuity of family identity through the transition (Lashewicz and Keating 2009). Family identity influences how adult children participate in the caregiving of their parents; the structure, character, and generational orientation of the family shape the way that adult children enact caregiving obligations as

a group, including the nature and degree of conflict between members (Huff and Cotte 2012; Matthews and Rosner 1988).

Adult siblings function differently than non-familial groups when making decisions. They are often torn between multiple decision goals, including making rational decisions (i.e., deliberate and careful choices after collecting necessary information) and making decisions that best reflect family identity (Kirchler et al. 2001; Silverstein et al. 2008). Family character, structure, and generational orientation may point toward one elder care option, while a more objective (i.e., "rational") assessment of alternatives may point toward another option. Fortunately, adult siblings are usually able to mobilize their emotional ties to provide care for their parent(s), and are often able to prioritize parental needs in the face of disagreement between siblings (Connidis 2010; Matthews and Rosner 1988).

In sum, research has shown that major family transitions can have short-term and long-term impacts on consumption, and can trigger changes in consumption for individual family members and for the household as a collective (Gentry et al. 1995; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton 1997). However, much remains to be known about family transitions and identity enactment at this stage of the family life cycle.

METHOD

To examine the role of consumption in the late stage of the family life cycle and to focus on family identity enactments across households, I adopted an interpretive approach. Two phases of data collection were completed: the first was focused on understanding how commercial elder care impacted adult children's relationships with

106

their parents, and the challenges associated with helping an elderly parent choose and use care services. The second phase of data collection had a wider perspective, and was used to understand how families with an elderly parent used consumption to enact family identity.

Data Collection

In the first phase of data collection, I conducted depth interviews with nine adults who had an elderly parent using some form of elder care service. Informants were asked to share their experiences with helping their parents choose and use elder care. If not spontaneously revealed, the interviewer prompted informants to describe the challenges, particularly as they related to sibling interaction. A purposive sampling method was used to compare and contrast the experiences of individuals who had siblings with those who were only children. Informants were not compensated. Interviews were conducted in informants' homes, with the exception of Diane and Debbie, who were each living with their mothers and requested to be interviewed at the first author's home. Table 2 presents detail on these informants. This data set provided a rich understanding of the challenges and conflict involved in making decisions for and with an elderly parent, particularly when the parent is deemed to be no longer able to make his/her own decisions.

In order to understand the phenomenon from multiple perspectives and generations, I embarked on a second phase of data collection, which involved recruiting families in which an elderly parent would be able to participate. In this phase of data collection, I conducted depth interviews with multiple members of five families. Inclusion criteria for this phase were that a minimum of two adult siblings were willing to

participate, and that one elderly parent was using some form of elder care service and was willing and cognitively able to participate. A convenience sampling method was used to contact adults who could then pass on the information to their sibling(s) and parents. If all parties were willing to be interviewed, I established contact to arrange separate interview times. Each informant was compensated with $100.

Interviews were unstructured, and informants were simply asked to share their own perspectives on themselves or their mother and/or father coming to require elder care services. In each family, an elderly mother was interviewed, and in the Green and Brown families one of the adult children attended their mother's interview at her request. Adult children were interviewed separately. More detail on family members is presented in table 3. Coincidentally, each family's elderly father either was living or had lived in a nursing home until the end of his life. The participants reflected on the experiences of transitioning their husbands/fathers to nursing homes in addition to sharing their experiences with themselves or their mothers' currently increasing need for care. In table 4, I briefly present the historical background of each family in order to better contextualize my interpretation of the data.

Data Analysis

Data took the form of transcripts and field notes, totaling 801 single-spaced pages: 207 from phase 1 and 594 from phase 2. Analysis involved careful reading of the data, axial coding, and part-to-whole comparisons within each informant's transcript, across each family's set of transcripts, and across the data set as a whole (Charmaz 2006). NVIVO 9 software was used to examine how emergent themes played out within and

across families, within and across generations (i.e., adult generation compared with elderly generation), and within and across individual informants.

As I sought to interpret and theorize, I examined the transcripts individually and together, and I reflected on my personal experiences with elderly family members and elder care. My findings presented below are rooted in the data gathered in the second collection phase. The first phase gave me a deep understanding of adult children's experiences, and I expanded on this in the second phase, where I focused on the family collective.

CONSUMPTION IN DYNAMIC FAMILY IDENTITY ENACTMENT

As stated earlier, my research goal was to understand how families enact family identity when an elderly family member requires commercial elder care. I arrange my findings around three central themes that comprise families' efforts to enact family identity through this major transition: independent living across adult family members, engagement in everyday consumption, and renegotiation of time consumption. Together, these themes explain how the families in my sample rely on consumption to enact family identity through this late stage in the family life cycle.

Independent Living

The families represented in the data were very concerned with independence, and spoke unprompted and at length about how independence was a key aspect of family character and was a highly desirable characteristic of individual family members. The elderly informants in the sample were keen to describe themselves as independent, their children were equally quick to note that their mothers cherished their independence, and

each family, when analyzed as a whole, valued narratives that involved the elderly

parent(s)' historic geographic mobility and motivation to pursue opportunity, often at the

expense of being in close proximity to their own families-of-origin. Thus, the identities of

the families-of-origin was firmly rooted in the histories of the elderly parents, which

involved moving long distances to pursue employment, attend school, or engage in

military service. The deeply rooted nature of independence in family character was

evident across my informant families.

The Meaning of "Independence" in Family Character

My interpretation of the data reveals that independence takes on two meanings

that are important to this study. First, it revolves around living arrangements and

everyday life: for my families, who live in twenty-first century Canada, a significant

marker of one's independence is predicated on his/her ability to live independently from

others. This meaning shapes consumption by initially problematizing the use of elder care

services. The elderly and their children were concerned that employing commercial

services to facilitate everyday living would compromise the elderly individual's

independence as it relates to living arrangements.

For example, the Black family informants have concerns that Olive's impending

move to an assisted living facility will compromise her independence. Olive, who is 92

and currently lives in a seniors' apartment, describes herself as a 'terrible independent

person." She is careful to stress that it's important for her to do things on her own, and

although the assisted living facility will make her everyday living easier – by providing

meals, housekeeping, laundry, etc. – she notes some concern that she may be less

independent after she moves. Even though she has recently decided to put her name on a

waiting list for assisted living, Olive thinks the move may be difficult: "I just want to be

on my own and do things my way. [I'm a] stubborn old beggar!" Her son, James, sees

her as very independent as well, and believes this quality has prevented her from

admitting that she needs help in the past, such as when she was providing full-time

nursing care for her husband. Rebecca's daughter, Julie, also notes "mom is very

independent. Very independent…[chuckles]… Independent and stubborn." Julie also

wonders "if she needs [the nursing home], you know. Sometimes I think maybe she can

manage on her own." In each of their interviews, the members of the Black family

expressed some concern that using elder care services would strip Olive of some of her

most dominant personality characteristic because it would reflect the fact that Olive is no

longer able to live on her own.

As the informant families enter and experience the late stage of family life cycle,

they describe the challenges associated with declining self-sufficiency. Independence is

valued to the extent that the elderly parent is able to maintain his or her physical and

financial safety. That is, the parent's independence is prioritized until a physical safety

risk is perceived.

The elderly informants were concerned with their own physical safety, and had

begun to notice a decline in their own abilities, which had prompted the recent search for

elder care. For example, Mary, the 85-year-old mother of the White family, enjoyed

living in her own home, but was preparing to move into an assisted living facility because

of her decreasing stability: "I was out in the back yard one day and I fell. I got up. And I

thought, gee, you know if I couldn't have gotten up I don't know how long I would have

been there… [This situation] is no good for [my daughters] because they'd be worrying all the time. So this way [assisted living] is better." Mary's three daughters are in agreement that Mary's independence is important, but it should not come at the expense of a risk to physical safety. Her daughter, Peggy, wants Mary to remain independent, but recognizes that Mary's current living arrangement poses a risk for more falls: "She goes up and down stairs and does her own laundry. She doesn't wait until someone comes and helps her to do it or anything. She wants to be as independent as she can be." Similarly, Mary's daughter Patty worries about Mary's safety: "She's not steady on her feet. I worry… She has fallen a few times. She broke her wrist…But she won't tell you if she falls. She won't admit to being hurt. It's like an [inner] strength thing." The White family, like the others in the sample, struggles with maintaining and fostering the independence and safety of the elderly family member, particularly as the independence relates to living on one's own.

The second meaning of independence refers to the nature of relationships between adults in the family. As informants described the value they placed on independence, they implicitly defined it in relation to other family members rather than to the marketplace. As a result, commercial elder care services came to be regarded as solutions to the need for the elderly parent to continue living independently from his/her adult children. The marketplace, then, allows the family to preserve an important component of family character.

Much of the meaning in this conception of intra-familial independence was built on the assumption that providing routine nursing care to another adult family member is beyond the scope of enacting family. Families knew that these routine tasks – such as

help with toileting and bathing, meal preparation, medication dispensing – were critical to the well-being of their elderly mothers, but considered performance of these tasks to be infringements on the boundaries of family responsibilities, and therefore they were not considered legitimate family identity enactments.

The Brown family was, collectively, quite adamant that providing daily nursing care to a family member was beyond the scope of familial obligation. Frances, the 102-year-old matriarch, had always been insistent that she live independently from her children, and that if she could not provide herself with requisite nursing care that it should be provided by a nurse. Frances had undergone a colostomy 15 years ago, and in spite of being nearly blind had cared for her condition on her own until recently when she moved into a nursing home and allowed nurses to change her dressings, etc. She did not feel that her children should attend to her daily needs: "it is just not their responsibility to help me to the toilet, in the shower. I don't want help with [my colostomy bag] from my children." Dora, Frances' daughter, agreed: "She's always saying 'I have to be here, I can't look after myself anymore.'" Between Doug, Dora, and their mother, there was no consideration given to Frances moving in with either of her children because of the nursing care required of the colostomy. Doug notes, "she always said that she'd never live with the kids. She never wanted to live with her children." He has no desire to provide the daily nursing care that Frances needs, and believes the nursing home is the best possible option for Frances. Thus, by employing in-home caregivers or moving to a seniors' apartment, the elderly parent maintains his independence from his children, while becoming more dependent on the marketplace. In this regard, the informants regarded elder care facilities as the best of a bad situation because they permitted an

elderly parent to live independently from her children. The concept of independence, particularly as it relates to independent living, plays a focal role in family identity enactments, even as an elderly family member loses his/her ability to live alone, because it is a prominent component of family character.

Independence, Family Structure, and Generational Orientation

For the families in my study, a multi-generational household was not considered a viable option because it would compromise the hierarchical structure of the family. The role of head-of-household would come under question, which would be unacceptably problematic for both generations of adults. Therefore, the use of commercial care services, to the extent that the enable the elderly to live independently from their children, promotes the maintenance of family structure.

In the Green family, the 85-year-old matriarch, Eileen, is revered as ferociously independent and the head of the household. Currently, Eileen resides in a nursing home. When reflecting on their decisions not to take their mother in when she required full-time care, Carol and Conrad drew from Eileen's life story and respected her independent nature; they believed that having their mother live with either of them would have significantly altered the hierarchy that existed in their respective homes. Carol felt Eileen's personality would have a negative impact on Carols' household, and because of this, she felt that she "could not provide a home" suitable for her mother.

Dora describes a similar situation in the Brown family, in which cohabitation between her mother, Frances, and Dora would be inconsistent with the family's collective identity because it would alter the structure of Dora's own home:

My parents think that we shouldn't have to look after them. Because, they have lived their life. I have my life down. I have my kids, and my kids are my priority. I'm just looking at from my, from our view. And that's the way it is in my family. Maybe not all families feel that way. Because I think some people feel that their kids have a duty to look after them. My parents never felt that it was my duty to look after them. They always said I'm not living with you, and I've always said I'm not living with my kids. They got their kids to look after and they have their life to live.

Dora's brother, Doug, echoes the sentiment: even if he wanted his mother to live with him, "she wouldn't have lived here anyhow. That's part of her independence. She wanted, [my parents] always wanted to be independent. Do their own thing. And she wanted us to grow up and be independent. And so there was never any desire on her part to live with us."

The family's generational orientation also shapes the use of elder care services. As noted above, the family-of-origin's identity is primarily oriented to the past, and family identity is enacted around shared values of independence and independent living between the elderly and his/her children. Thus, the use of commercial elder care enables the family-of-origin to preserve its character. However, adult informants' respective nuclear families were decidedly more future-focused in their generational orientation. Children and grandchildren are sacrosanct, and informant families believed that an elderly parent/grandparent in the household would change the nature of the relationship between parents and young children in the nuclear family, as well as to the spousal relationship between parents.

For example, the Gray family has concluded that it is best for Rebecca, their 92-year-old mother, to move to a nursing home rather than live with one of her grown children. Rebecca does not want to be a "burden" to her children, who each have children of their own. Rebecca is reluctant to ask for help at times, because she knows her daughter, Nancy, is busy with her children and grandchildren: "Sometimes I hate to ask Nancy to do things, you know. Because she does so much." Nancy, who lives a few blocks from her mother, visits her mother daily, but feels that is the extent of the geographic closeness that she and her mother can tolerate without having a negative effect on either of their lifestyles. Nancy notes, "I don't think I could have my mother live with me. She could live here for a while, but I don't know that I would want it all the time, day-to-day." Nancy's brother, Norm, also prefers the current living arrangement for his mother because it allows him to focus his at-home time on his wife and son. If his mother lived with him or with his sister, it

> would not be the best solution, because we both have our own families, you know. And even though Mom is pretty independent, when mom comes to visit, my wife feels she has to entertain my mother. But when you're living permanently [together], you just can't entertain. Where are we going today, where do you want to go shopping today, do you want to go out and drive in the country? You can't do that everyday. You have your own life and circle… and I'm sure it must be a lot worse in a lot of other families, because my mother is pretty easy to get along with!

The informant families were insistent that cohabitation between the elderly parent and his or her children would have some advantages but, ultimately, would be an unnecessary

burden on the younger generations. Commercial care facilities and services, however, allow adult children to maintain a dual focus on their parents and on their offspring, without compromising the relationships with either. Therefore, using elder care promotes family identity enactments for the family-of-origin and the newer, nuclear families of the adult children. Commercial care services, when needed, allow family hierarchies to be maintained, and prevent the elderly from becoming dependent on their children for daily nursing needs, thereby enabling the continuation of family character.

In sum, the families in this study rely on commercial elder care services to enable family identity enactments that revolve around a shared understanding of "the way we do things" (Bennett et al. 1988, 214). In this sense, the marketplace offers a solution to families who value independence and independent living between adult generations. An elderly mother moving in with her child, who has his own family, constitutes a compromise of independence for the family as a whole and for its individual members. Thus, by using commercial elder care, elderly parents' physical safety can be maintained, and the critical yet mundane tasks such as toileting and giving medication can be performed by trained staff. The outcome for informants as they experience this stage of family life cycle is that they seek care solutions that are consistent with their family identity – particularly as it relates to the life stories and challenges of their parents – and enable their parents to maintain independence. In preserving family structure, character, and the generational orientation, commercial elder care services permit family identity enactments for families that strongly value independent living within the family.

Everyday Consumption

Family identity enactments through the late stage of the family life cycle prominently feature elderly members' engagement in everyday, routine consumption activities. In addition to enabling adult children and their elderly parents to live independently of each other, the marketplace facilitates the continued enactment of family identity by allowing elderly parents to enact individual identity through shopping and leisure activities. These everyday consumption activities become a priority for adult children, who see their parent's continued engagement with shopping and leisure as a proxy for independence.

In the families interviewed for this study, these everyday consumption activities included day-to-day banking (e.g., balancing a cheque book), shopping for groceries and personal items, shopping for materials needed for craft-making (e.g., buying fabric, wool), and decorating living spaces (e.g., acquiring new furniture, home decorations). Unsurprisingly, the elderly mothers in the sample were keen to maintain engagement with these consumption activities even as they employed commercial care services for daily living. For example, the White family stressed that Mary, the elderly mother, prided herself on doing her own laundry and would only move to a nursing home that would allow her to continue this routine task. Interestingly, Mary only mentioned the laundry briefly, while each of her daughters noted it without prompting:

> *"Mom picked [nursing home] as first on her list because she could do her own laundry. That was important. She could go in, but she was still independent if she could do her own laundry." (Pam)*
>
> *"She wanted to have a place where she could do her own laundry." (Patty)*

"She wants to do her own laundry and she can do her own laundry there if she

wants to. That will be the big thing." (Peggy)

Mary's ability to do her own laundry becomes important to her children because it

represents an act of independence, which constitutes a continuation of family identity. It

therefore becomes a focal issue for Patty, Pam, and Peggy as their mother moves into a

nursing home.

In other families, the important consumption activities were more passive in

nature. For example, Frances Brown finds that one of the few activities she can do is

listen to the radio, and her children are very concerned that she continue to enjoy this

pastime. Her daughter, Dora, bought her a radio when she moved into the nursing home,

but was disappointed that it did not have adequate reception for AM stations, which are

Frances' favourite:

I can't get any AM stations on it up there. You can get lots of FM stations. They

come in really good. But she likes to listen to the [base]ball games. She loves ball.

And they're always on the AM stations. And mostly all on the FM stations, all you

get is music. You don't get all these talk shows. So she couldn't get any. So she's

gone back to her old radio. And she knows where she can get them on there and

what-not, so. She's going to use that. So she says she's worldly, she knows what's

going on. You know. She listens to the news and what-not. So, she's doing as best

she can, really. I think she really does well. I really do. For her age, and for the

complications she's got. She can't walk, she can't see.

Dora is very focused on her mother's enjoyment of radio, because it is one of the few

activities that Frances can still enjoy on her own. Therefore, it is an enactment of family

identity that symbolizes the continued identity of Doug and Dora's family-of-origin, in addition to their mother's individual identity.

It is not surprising that elderly individuals wish to maintain some degree of engagement in consumption activities for their own enjoyment and in order to maintain their identity work. What is interesting is that this identity work is very important to their adult children. I suggest that this is because the elderly parent's continuing involvement in consumption activities is more than just identity work for the individual. It is a form of collective identity work for the family.

Adult children were very concerned that their parents continue to maintain independence by engaging in these activities. Further, these everyday consumption activities afforded parent and child to draw on and re-work their own relational identities. I found that mother-daughter shopping was highly prized by elderly mothers and their daughters. For example, Julie and James Black each visit their mother every week. Julie often stays overnight, and focuses her visit on helping Olive do the shopping and activities that she enjoys but struggles to do on her own: I "take Mom on errands to do the things she needs to do. I bug her to death about getting things done she doesn't want to do [chuckes]. And we, you know, we sit and we play a game together or we watch television together. So that's sort of the dynamic. My brother takes Mom every Sunday out to see Dad [in the nursing home]." Olive looks forward to the weekly shopping trips, because she has always enjoyed looking in the shops and watching people, and she no longer feels comfortable driving: "[Julie] takes me into the bank, and we go shopping. She always takes me. I wouldn't know what I would do without her, really. I don't really like driving much anymore." Olive's son, James, is glad that his sister takes their mother

for her weekly shopping trip, because it allows Olive to continue activities and outings that she has always enjoyed, and therefore preserves the ongoing character of the family.

As the parent experiences physical and/or cognitive decline, adult children take on a consultative role in everyday consumption. For example, what begins as an offer to take mom grocery shopping one day evolves into a weekly shopping trip together, and eventually evolves into mom making a list for her child to procure, and later into the child determining – with some help – what groceries are needed. At times, the adult child reported being frustrated by this consultative role, and had to exercise some self-control while assisting their mothers with shopping, banking, or craftwork. For example, Carol and Conrad try to facilitate their mother's everyday shopping and craftwork, but at times they find themselves torn between steering Eileen to purchase what they feel she needs and allowing her to purchase what she wants. As a consequence of his frustration in this regard, Conrad has moved to take over the banking and finances, while Carol has begun to facilitate periodic shopping. She often finds herself frustrated by her mother, but continues to encourage Eileen to exercise choice in the shops because it is a marker of Eileen's independent nature:

> *She called me the other day and said she wanted to get a duvet cover and she wanted to buy a sheet and make it herself. And I said "That's fine." She was demanding "I need this and I need it now… And I have no way of getting there." It's always immediate. So I brought her to Walmart. I know that she is able to sew, however you want something that's going to look nice why don't we look at actual duvet covers, which we did. And by the time we left Walmart she actually just bought another duvet. No cover for it… In all honesty that day I had to walk*

away for a little while and just say "You know what maybe you just need to spend

some time in the linen section and decide what you really want for yourself

because I'm not able to help you at this point."

Eileen recounted – unprompted – a similar version of events for this same shopping trip.

Eileen seemed unconcerned that her daughter was bothered, and explained that she has

always spoken her mind and has no intention of stopping now that she lives in a nursing

home. In describing her reaction to Carol in the store, Eileen said "let her boil, says I. Let

her boil and see if she explodes. I don't care." Eileen's feisty, independent nature had

played out in the shopping trip, and Carol acquiesced in order to maintain the traditional

family dynamic. In effect, then, the shopping trip is more than identity work for Eileen.

It allows the Green family to continue to reproduce its own identity by fostering and

facilitating the elder's consumption activities.

For the very old, engagement with consumption is on a very minimal basis, and

done only through their children. Children emphasize the importance of shopping for

their parents, and describe some of the challenges of making purchase decisions on their

behalf. For example, Nancy and her mother, Rebecca, had a weekly routine that involved

grocery shopping together. Nancy noted that Rebecca would not be able to shop on her

own, but that she always has her own list. Occasionally, Rebecca requests that they make

a special trip into the city to buy something, and Nancy is happy to oblige, even though

she feels Rebecca needs help making decisions:

last week, she wanted a new lamp for the living room. So we go into Home Depot,

and the one she picked, I said, "Mom, I don't think it's what you want, it's too

short." "Oh, no, no, I think that's what I want. I don't want one of those big

things." So, anyway, we get the lamp home. Get it all together. Call her the next

morning, "So how was your lamp last night?" "Oh, I think it's too short." "Okay,

well, that's alright. We'll take it back. That's not an issue." Because I don't want

to, you know, even though I knew it was going to be too short for the back of the

sofa. It wasn't going to be tall enough. But I thought, "Okay, that's your

decision." So, sometimes I really have to bite my tongue and just go along with it.

Nancy continues to encourage her mother's shopping decisions because they promote the

continuation of Rebecca's identity and of family character. Further, the shopping serves

as a minor distraction from the larger life changes, including Rebecca's impending move

to a nursing home. This is consistent with prior work, which has shown that families can

use mundane consumption behaviors to cope with transitions (Gentry et al. 1995). In the

informant families, the elderly parent's increasing dependence on care services could be

tempered if he or she were able to continue some form of engagement with consumption,

no matter how small the scale or scope. Elderly parents and their children seemed to take

solace in these rather mundane activities because they symbolized the continued identity

work of the elder. As their parents progress into very old age, adult children keep up this

identity work on behalf of their parents; the children become intent on enabling their

parents to continue with consumption behaviours that play a prominent and important

role in their parents' identity. The behaviours with which children are keen to assist tend

to be ones that reflect long-standing preferences and passions of the elderly parents.

Families struggled when it became apparent that an elderly member no longer had

interest in a favourite consumption activity. For example, James' father, Orville, had

loved to drive and care for his cars, cook meals for the family, and watch sports on

television. When Orville moved into a nursing home two years ago, he was no longer able to drive or cook, which prompted James to do everything in his power to enable his father to watch television. He bought a small television that fit into the room, and a special remote with large buttons, but his father had no ability or interest in watching. This was troubling to James,

because [my father] loved hockey. Now it's like he couldn't be bothered anymore. Like he turned the switch off. I said, "you gonna watch the playoffs?" "Yep, I'm watching every game." But he never watched anything. He never turned it on. He was there, but he was gone. He'll be 90 next week, and that's a good run.

In sum, we find that families use consumption to enact family identity at this stage in family life. Reflective of the dynamic nature of this phase of life, adult children take on an increasingly involved role in assisting with everyday consumption.

Consumption Of Time

Family time is a key component of family identity enactments. In contemporary Western culture, for the years leading up to the late stage in family life cycle, adults in the family often lead relatively independent lives, and identity enactments are fairly consistent (Bennett et al. 1988). Family time is typically idealized, treasured, and focused on unstructured leisure activities (Epp and Price 2012). Toward the end of the life cycle, an elderly member's need for daily care necessitates a change in family identity enactments, prompting a renegotiation of how the family will consume time. Adult children take the lead role in the allocation of family time, and in the determination of how resources will be used to perform family time. Family identity enactments – the

intrafamilial communication and behaviours that members perform to "produce" family –

play a focal role in decisions about how and why family time will be consumed. I reveal

that consumption of time is influenced by two goals of adult children: performing family

identity enactments by providing care to the elderly family member, and performing

family identity enactments by negotiating with siblings (if available) to ensure that the

parent(s)' needs are met.

Time for Care-Giving

As elderly family members require assistance, their children offer various forms

of care. The families in this study used commercial care services to provide daily nursing

care for their parents, but adult children continued to provide care in other ways. Care-

giving can involve emotional support, social linkage to family and to society, phone calls

and visiting, affection and concern – all of which are vital to the well-being of older

people (Brody 2004). This distinction between market-based care and intra-familial is

often labeled formal versus informal care, and is reflective of our cultural conceptions of

market offerings as less personal but more precise (Swanberg et al. 2006; Waldrop 2006).

Further, it reflects our assumption that commercial elder care – if it is of good quality –

fills an important need for our elderly members of society and for their children. By

permitting these generations to live separately, commercial care services allow adult

children dedicated time with their own children and grand children, time to pursue

employment, and time with their elderly parents that is focused on the social aspects of

family identity enactments. Commercial care services also allow elderly individuals their

own physical and psychological space, which is of fundamental importance to those who

value living independently from their children because it allows family time to be planned and social in nature.

For example, James and Julie focused their weekly visits with their mother on social activities rather than caregiving in a traditional sense. James noted "generally speaking, I think the family's still the best people to look after their own parent," but stressed that "in our culture" it is very difficult to provide the daily care that elderly family members sometimes require: "People are busy. We've got pressure on ourselves. And that's something that's been instilled, I think: I've got to work and I've got to do this. And you don't have [the time]" to devote to nursing an aging parent. James explained that Harry Chapin's song, "Cat's in the Cradle," is very fitting. For James, the song represents the tragedy of not spending time with one's children, and it clearly represents James' position that his time is best spent visiting his parents; the best way to promote family is to simply spend time together.

Adult informants relied on commercial care services, and apart from occasional monitoring and managing care plans with the professional care-givers, they focused family identity enactments on provisions of other forms of care. At this stage of family life cycle, family time becomes oriented around informal care, which primarily involved social visiting. For example, the White sisters were very concerned with helping their mother choose a nursing home that is geographically close to each of them in order to enable regular social visits between the daughters and their mother. Each sister perceived her primary responsibility as frequently visiting Mary, and to periodically check in on the management of the nursing home. The social time was basically distributed evenly across the siblings, but the time involved in managing their mother's care fell primarily to Patty

126

because Patty is self-employed, part-time, from her own home. Consequently, "most of the organizing and keeping tabs and talking to the social workers and stuff," (Pam) fell to Patty. In conjunction, these two uses of time constitute care-giving, albeit in a different form that if Mary were living with one of her daughters. Thus, the informal caregiving of adult children involves functioning as companion and consultant for elderly parents' consumption needs. Time consumed in these ways becomes legitimized and an important way for family identity to be maintained through the late stage of the family life cycle.

Time for Negotiating

The transition to the use of elder care services for an elderly parent is often marked with challenges and strains on sibling relationships. A considerable amount of time is required to manage a parent's formal care, and to perform the informal care-giving responsibilities, and adult siblings can encounter tensions as this work is done. There can be a host of issues to negotiate, including when to suggest that a parent consider commercial care, how to distribute decision-making authority, and how to allocate workload. Perceptions of fairness are a key determination of sibling tension (Lashewicz and Keating 2009). Consistent with prior research, I find that siblings in my sample manage their conflicts in order to maintain functional intra-familial relationships (Matthews and Rosner 1988). The adult informants described points of tension with their siblings – ranging from trivial, by their own admission, to substantial – but also stressed that they did everything under their power to resolve issues and keep the peace.

For example, Patty and Peggy are irritated by what they see as their sister Pam's lack of involvement, but do not communicate this to her directly because the intra-

familial social repercussions will be too severe. Patty and Peggy set aside time for negotiating among themselves, and time for individual venting to their spouses about how difficult it is to manage sibling relations. The sisters gather formally when it is time to make a decision about their mother's care, and they approach this meeting with a sense of formality in order to maintain pleasant relationships among themselves: "We've actually gone and had meetings. We've gone of for a drink or a coffee, and had a little talk" (Pam).

Other families establish formal times for making decisions in an effort to make sure all siblings have the available information and are able to share their opinions. For example, Norm and Nancy Gray meet twice a year to discuss their mother's situation. They stay in touch informally through email and phone calls, but make a point of having a formal meeting when Norm comes home to visit his mother. This communication helps them to feel prepared to deal with uncertainties of the future: "she could have a stroke or a heart attack really fast, you know, and be completely incapacitated. That would change everything. So, we as siblings, to look after her, we have to anticipate things and be sort of ready" (Norm). Norm and Nancy incorporate these conversations into family time in order to maintain family identity.

In the Green family, disagreements about how to care for their mother had resulted in two siblings (my informants) becoming estranged from their three other siblings. At this stage in the family life cycle, the strain on sibling relationships can be enormous, particularly when the sibling relationships were historically volatile or troubled (Lashewicz and Keating 2009), and this impacts how adult children spend time with each other. Carol believes that her biggest challenge has been to maintain functional

128

relationships with her siblings. She believes her estranged brothers have not devoted a sufficient amount of time to negotiating with the siblings about what is best for their mother, and the outcome has been negative for the family:

> *I would have to say that I think the biggest thing is that children of aging parents maintain a healthy adult perspective. And it's easy to fall into a less than adult perspective when you're dealing with your siblings because old patterns are old patterns.*

Carol and her brothers did not have strong relationships over the past several years, and the stress of managing their mother's care has been emotionally taxing for all of them. Carol and Conrad were saddened by their siblings' disengagement from their mother's care, but took comfort in their own efforts to create family time with their mother.

In sum, in addition to drawing on market-based care services and engaging in everyday consumption behaviors together, adult children and their elderly parents must also renegotiate how they allocate time for family identity enactments. The consumption of time for identity enactment shifts to include caregiving through the managing of commercial care services, social visits, and light household maintenance tasks. Family identity is challenged when siblings must come together to manage their parent(s)' care, especially when they disagree about how to allocate resources or responsibilities. These major shifts in consumption of time reflect the family's ability to renegotiate the ways it enacts family identity during this stage in family life cycle.

DISCUSSION

Drawing on interviews with multiple members of families in the late stage of the family life cycle, I find that consumption plays an instrumental role in family identity enactment for Western families in three ways. First, commercial care services are used by families to preserve family identity by maintaining independent living arrangements between adults. Independence, particularly as it relates to living alone, is a critical component of family character, and families take pride in an elderly member's ability to live alone as long as possible. Once physical safety risks become a concern for the elderly or their children, commercial care services enable adult family members to continue to live independently from each other, thereby facilitating family identity enactments. Second, consumption activities, such as shopping or leisure activities, are prioritized as ways to maintain the elderly parent's identity and the family's collective focus on independence. Adult children become focused on promoting and enabling their parents' everyday consumption activities, because they serve as a marker of the parent's identity work and preservation of family identity. Third, the consumption of time is renegotiated according to the Western cultural perspective that time is something that can and should be consumed and saved. Adult siblings allocate family time in different ways in order to prioritize social visits with their parents, manage and organize their parents' care services, and to negotiate among themselves on issues related to parental care. Together, these relationships between family identity and consumption are suggestive of the instrumental role of consumption at this stage of the family life cycle. More than a symbolic resource for enacting family identity, consumption serves an instrumental role, and permits families to maintain their collective and individual identities.

This work fills an important gap in the literature by examining elder care consumption from multiple perspectives within the family, because the dynamic and often problematic interplay between individuals, sibling groups, parent-child groups, and the family collective is often overlooked in studies of elder care consumption that focus on the perspective of one individual (Davey and Szinovacz 2008). The focus on independence, consumption, and family identity enactments across households is also novel.

My informants' emphasis on independence is not surprising because it is reflective of the Western cultural focus on autonomy and self-sufficiency. The ability to be self-sufficient is strongly linked to identity, and young children are raised to be materially and psychologically independent from their parents (Kagitcibasi 2005). This cultural value is neither evolutionary nor adaptive; rather, it reflects a cultural ideology linked to capitalism, economic development, and urbanization (Giddens 1991; Guisinger and Blatt 1994). In the context of elder care, this value manifests as a taken-for-granted notion that adult family members should live independently from each other. For older people, the ability to live independently often becomes a more vital concern than the actual impediments to living independently, and many people view dependency as being a burden on others (Butler and Lewis 1973). Consequently, there is a cultural resistance to the use of elder care services and to cohabitation between elderly people and their children (Agich 1993). Indeed, elderly people who still manage to live independently are lauded by family, friends, and society. Further, the elderly person's transition from giver of care (to children) to recipient of care can be very difficult for the elderly individual. I build on this to reveal that living independently from family members can be more

important than living independently from a market-offered care service. Once daily care is required, commercial offerings can function as solutions for families who value independence between elderly and adult generations.

Caring for an elderly parent involves fulfilling reciprocal obligation to that parent, and responsibility to one's siblings (Lashewicz and Keating 2009). By providing care through the marketplace, contemporary families are able to ensure their parents' comfort and safety while also ensuring that their own households are centred on children and grandchildren. This tendency to resist moving an elderly parent into a household with young children may be the outcome of the current social condition wherein dual-income families have limited time to spend with their children, family size has decreased, and child-focused households have become the norm (Hays 1996).

In this paper, I offer support for a broader perspective of care-giving. Historically, care-giving has been understood to entail performing the work of giving care, such as mothers performing the mundane tasks associated with childcare or adult children performing the mundane tasks associated with caring for an elderly or ill family member (Davey and Szinovacz 2008; Satow 2005; Waldrop 2006). I build on this to demonstrate that care-giving can also be conceptualized as managing the provision of care (Huff and Cotte 2013). The adult children in this sample provide requisite care to their elderly parents by arranging and managing commercial care services, thereby performing care-giving via the marketplace[4]. This is different from using the marketplace to facilitate their own performance of care; the adult children rely on market offerings to enact the family identity of their family-of-origin by privileging the independent living arrangements

---

[4] I note that this perspective is rather mechanical. Caregivers often develop enduring and warm relationships with their clients (see Barnhart and Peñaloza 2012).

132

between themselves and their parents, and to enact the family identity of their respective nuclear families by privileging their lifestyle and child-focused household. Therefore, I offer strong evidence that the marketplace enables care-giving within the family, and preserves multiple family identities across generations.

In addition to being theoretically rich, the context of an elderly family member requiring daily caregiving is relevant to a large proportion of the North American population. Many of these families will rely on some form of commercial service, but many will also resist commercial offerings. Culture plays a prominent role in family identity by influencing norms about commercial care-giving, whether in the form of childcare or elder care, as well as the value placed on autonomy and independence. In many Eastern cultures, for example, households typically include multiple generations of adults, and placing an elder in a care facility would be considered shameful. Cross-cultural marketplace solutions are beginning to cater to different cultural values in North America. For example, nursing homes that cater exclusively to Chinese residents have become enormously popular in Toronto and Vancouver by providing Chinese menus, activities, décor, and overall philosophy of care (Bascaramurty 2012).

I acknowledge that the experiences and perspectives of my informant families are not necessarily reflective of all or most families, and that efforts to apply my findings to elder care policy developments should be done with caution. However, I did not sample purposively for families who value independence, and I suspect that it is a relatively common component of family character across North American families. Further, most adults with aging parents will eventually find themselves making decisions about elder care, and it will be important to develop public policy and social marketing initiatives

based on a sound understanding of the problems faced by families in order to foster

healthy family relationships (Dellasega and Mastrian 1995).

Future Research

This research sets the stage for multiple avenues of further inquiry in the realms

of family identity and/or elder care consumption. For example, adult sibling relationships

have been largely overlooked in the social sciences. This research sheds some light on

how siblings work together through a significant family transition, and raises some

additional questions about sibling relationships in this context. For example, how do

factors like gender, birth order, or geographic proximity to an elderly parent influence

sibling relationships? How does each sibling's respective nuclear family identity play into

family-of-origin identity enactments in the context of elder care?

Gender plays an important role in family identity enactments and consumption,

and it would be valuable to understand how the complexities of gender differences in

elder care consumption play out in family identity enactments (Connidis et al. 1996).

Siblings have also been under-researched, and a study of sibling relationships over time

would be helpful for understanding how family identity is enacted beyond the household.

In my research, I found support for extant work on disposition of special

possessions (Price et al. 2000); I noted that elderly parents' favorite possessions facilitate

the construction of home in a long-term care facility, for both the individual in care and

his/her family members. Special possessions support the maintenance of identity for the

elderly, and also serve as a totem for family identity maintenance in the future (Price et

al. 2000). However, given that elder care facilities typically have room for few

possessions, the process of moving into these smaller residences can be traumatic for the elderly who must give up many of their possessions (Belk 1988). Issues of inheritance arise during these transitions to smaller residences (as well as after death), as adult children must negotiate dispersion of family possessions (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981). Beyond the late stage of family life cycle, these special possessions take on a sacred status and serve as a reminder of the deceased family member (Gentry et al. 1995). Questions remain about how home is created in an elder care facility using special possessions, how children and their parent(s) negotiation the distribution of family possessions that cannot be moved into a care facility, how children incorporate these items into family identity enactments after their parents pass away, and how adult children ultimately dispose of their parents' possessions.

This work has some theoretical linkages to sharing in Western culture. Sharing plays a prominent role in family life, as do gift-giving and commodity-based exchange. Sharing is characterized by nonreciprocal exchange, hinges on social ties between actors, and reflects loving and caring intimate relationships (Belk 2010). Belk's (2010) work on sharing as a consumption behavior goes on to classify certain activities and orientations as falling beyond the scope of sharing; namely these include expectations of reciprocity and/or exchange, forced compliance, and expressions of thanks from recipients. In the context of elder care, the emotional labour of care-giving (including managing paid caregiving) defies classification as either sharing, gift-giving, or commodity exchange. Adult children often describe conflicting and intense emotions related to managing and providing care for their parents, and this can include feeing guilty, overwhelmed, resentful, and/or inadequate in their role as care-providing child (Merrill 1997). Together,

these conflicting emotions are reflective of our cultural uneasiness with blurring intimate relationships with money, particularly in contexts involving intimacy (Zelizer 2005). Consequently, it will be important to understand how professional and intra-familial care-giving is constructed and perceived by families in this late stage of the family life cycle.

Future research could also examine issues of consumer agency in care-giving to the very old and the elderly. Increasingly, the elderly are referred to as consumers of care, rather than recipients or patients, and this is reflective of our cultural tendency to privilege the empowered consumer; the ability to make and exercise choices in the marketplace is a critical marker of identity and independence (Barnhart and Penaloza 2009; Carder and Hernandez 2004). A study of how agency shifts and flows within the family would be helpful in illuminating the theoretical and practical concerns in elder care consumption.

REFERENCES

Agich, George J. (1993), *Autonomy and Long-Term Care*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Barnhart, Michelle (2009), "Who Are You Calling Old? A Study of Old Age Construction and Value Creation in the Elderly Consumption Ensemble," David Eccles School of Business, University of Utah, Dissertation; ProQuest UMI Microform 3370339.

Barnhart, Michelle and Lisa Penaloza (2009), "Negotiating Agency in the Elderly Consumption Ensemble," in *Advacnes in Consumer Research*, Vol. 36, ed. Ann L. McGill and Sharon Shavitt, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 53-55.

Bascaramurty, Dakshana (2012), "Ethnic-Focused Nursing Homes Put a Canadian Face on Filial Piety," *The Globe and Mail*.

Belk, Russell (2010), "Sharing," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (5), 715-34.

Belk, Russell W. (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (September), 139-68.

Bennett, Linda A., Steven J. Wolin, and Katharine J. McAvity (1988), "Family Identity, Ritual and Myth: A Cultural Perspective on Life Cycle Transitions," in *Family Transitions: Contiuity and Change over the Life Cycle*, ed. Celia Jaes Falicov, New York: Guilford, 211-34.

Brody, Elaine M. (2004), *Women in the Middle: Their Parent Care Years*, New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Butler, Robert N. and Myrna I. Lewis (1973), *Aging and Mental Health*, St. Louis: C.V. Mosby Company.

Carder, Paula C. and Mauro Hernandez (2004), "Consumer Discourse in Assisted Living," *Journal of Gerontology*, 59B (2), S58-S67.

Charmaz, Kathy (2006), *Constructing Grounded Theory*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Commuri, Suraj and James W. Gentry (2000), "Opportunities for Family Research in Marketing," *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 2000 (8), http://www.amsreview.org.

Connidis, Ingrid Arnet (2010), *Family Ties & Aging*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Connidis, Ingrid Arnet, Carolyn J. Rosenthal, and Julie Ann McMullin (1996), "The Impact of Family Composition on Providing Help to Older Parents," *Research on Aging*, 18 (4), 402-29.

Cotte, June and Stacy L. Wood (2004), "Families and Innovative Consumer Behavior: A Triadic Analysis of Sibling and Parental Influence," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (June), 78-86.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (1981), *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davey, Adam and Maximiliane E. Szinovacz (2008), "Introduction: Caregiving in Context," in *Caregiving Contexts: Cultural, Familial, and Societal Implications*, ed. Maximiliane E. Szinovacz and Adam Davey, New York: Springer.

Dellasega, Cheryl and Kathy Mastrian (1995), "The Process and Consequences of Institutionaizing an Elder," *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 17 (2), 123-40.

DeVault, Marjorie L. (2000), "Producing Family Time: Practices of Leisure Activity Beyond the Home," *Qualitative Sociology*, 23 (4), 485-503.

Ekstrom, Karin M. (2004), "Guest Editor's Introduction: Family Consumption," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 7 (3), 185-90.

Epp, Amber M. and Linda L. Price (2008), "Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (June), 50-70.

--- (2010), "The Storied Life of Singularized Objects: Forces of Agency and Network Transformation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (February), 820-37.

--- (2012), "Family Time in Consumer Culture," in *Transformative Consumer Research for Personal and Collective Well-Being*, ed. David Glen Mick, Simone Pettigrew, Cornelia Pechmann and Julie L. Ozanne, New York: Routledge.

Fellerman, Ritha and Kathleen Debevec (1993), "Kinship Exchange Networks and Family Consumption," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 20, ed. Leigh McAlister and Michael L. Rothschild, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 458-62.

Gentry, James W., Patricia F. Kennedy, Catherine Paul, and Ronald Paul Hill (1995), "Family Transitions During Grief: Discontinuities in Household Consumption Patterns," *Journal of Business Research*, 34, 67-79.

Giddens, Anthony (1991), *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Greenberg, Vivian E. (1989), *Your Best Is Good Enough: Aging Parents and Your Emotions*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Guisinger, Shan and Sidney J. Blatt (1994), "Individuality and Relatedness: Evolution of a Fundamental Dialectic," *American Psychologist*, 49 (2), 104-11.

Hays, Sharon (1996), *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Huff, Aimee Dinnin and June Cotte (2012), "The Ambivalent Role of Adult Siblings in Family Decisions About Elder Care," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 39, ed. Rohini Ahluwalia, Tanya Chartrand and Rebecca Ratner, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

--- (2013), "Using the Marketplace to Reconceptualize Motherhood," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 40, ed. Zeynep Gurhan-Canli, Cele Otnes and Juliet Rui Zhu, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

John, Deborah Roedder (1999), "Consumer Socialization of Children: A Retrospective Look at Twenty-Five Years of Research," *Jounral of Consumer Research*, 26 (December), 183-213.

John, Deborah Roedder and Catherine A. Cole (1986), "Age Differences in Information Processing: Understanding Deficits in Young and Elderly Consumers," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13 (December), 297-315.

Kagitcibasi, Cigdem (2005), "Autonomy and Relatedness in Cultural Context," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36 (4), 403-22.

Kang, Yong-Soon and Nancy M. Ridgway (1996), "The Importance of Consumer Market Interactions as a Form of Social Support for Elderly Consumers," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 15 (1), 108-17.

Kirchler, Erich, Christa Rodler, Erik Hölzl, and Katja Meier (2001), *Conflict and Decision-Making in Close Relationships: Love, Money and Daily Routines*, Philadelphia: Taylor & Francis.

Krause, Allison M., Lynda D. Grant, and Bonita C. Long (1999), "Sources of Stress Reported by Daughters of Nursing Home Residents," *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13 (3), 349-64.

Lashewicz, Bonnie and Norah Keating (2009), "Tensions among Siblings in Parent Care," *European Journal of Ageing*, 6, 127-35.

Law, Sharmistha, Scott A. Hawkins, and Fergus I. M. Craik (1998), "Repetition-Induced Belief in the Elderly: Rehabilitating Age-Related Memory Deficits," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (September), 91-107.

Marks, Nadine F. (1998), "Does It Hurt to Care? Caregiving, Work-Family Conflict, and Midlife Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage & The Family*, 60 (4), 951-66.

Matthews, Sarah H. and Tena Tarler Rosner (1988), "Shared Filial Responsibility: The Family as the Primary Caregiver," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 50 (1), 185-95.

Merrill, Deborah M. (1997), *Caring for Elderly Parents*, Westport, CT: Auburn House.

Moisio, Risto, Eric J. Arnould, and Linda L. Price (2004), "Between Mothers and Markets: Constructing Family Identity through Homemade Food," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 4 (3), 361-84.

Moschis, George P. and Anil Mathur (1993), "How They're Acting Their Age," *Marketing Management*, 2 (2), 40.

Murphy, Patrick E. and William A. Staples (1979), "A Modernized Family Life Cycle," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 6 (June), 12-22.

Penrod, Janice and Cheryl Dellasga (1998), "Caregivers' Experiences in Making Placement Decisions," *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 20 (6), 706-32.

Price, Linda L., Eric J. Arnould, and Carolyn Folkman Curasi (2000), "Older Consumers' Disposition of Special Possessions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (September), 179-201.

Reuss, Gillian Flynn, Sherry L. Dupuis, and Kyle Whitfield (2005), "Understanding the Experience of Moving a Loved One to a Long-Term Care Facility: Family Members' Perspectives," *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 46 (1), 17-46.

Rindfleisch, Aric, James E. Burroughs, and Frank Denton (1997), "Family Structure, Materialism, and Compulsive Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (March), 312-25.

Rodgers, Beth L. (1997), "Family Members' Experiences with the Nursing Home Placement of an Older Adult," *Applied Nursing Research*, 10 (2), 57-63.

Rosenthal, Carolyn J. (1985), "Kinkeeping in the Familial Division of Labor," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 47 (November), 965-74.

Satow, Roberta (2005), *Doing the Right Thing: Taking Care of Your Elderly Parents Even If They Did Not Take Care of You*, New York: Penguin Group.

Schaninger, Charles M. and William D. Danko (1993), "A Conceptual and Empirical Comparison of Alternative Household Life Cycle Models," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 19 (March), 580-94.

Schau, Hope Jensen, Mary C. Gilly, and Mary Wolfinbarger (2009), "Consumer Identity Renaissance: The Resurgence of Identity-Inspired Consumption in Retirement," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (August), 255-76.

Silverstein, Merril, Stephen Conroy, and Daphna Gans (2008), "Commitment to Caring: Filial Responsibility and the Allocation of Support by Adult Children to Older Mothers," in *Caregiving Contexts: Cultural, Familial, and Societal Implications*, ed. Maximiliane E. Szinovacz and Adam Davey, New York: Springer, 71-91.

Swanberg, Jennifer E., Terri Kanatzar, Marta Mendiondo, and Margaret McCoskey (2006), "Caring for Our Elders: A Contemporary Conundrum for Working People," *Families in Society*, 87 (3), 417-26.

The VOICE Group (2010), "Buying into Motherhood? Problematic Consumption and Ambivalence in Transitional Phases," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 13 (4), 373-97.

Waldrop, Deborah P. (2006), "Caregiving Systems at the End of Life: How Informal Caregivers and Formal Providers Collaborate," *Families in Society*, 87 (3), 427-37.

Wallendorf, Melanie and Eric Arnould (1991), "'We Gather Together:' Consumption Rituals of Thanksgiving Day," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18 (June), 13-31.

Warde, Alan (1990), "Introduction to the Sociology of Consumption," *Sociology*, 24 (1), 1-4.

Wilkes, Robert E. (1995), "Household Life-Cycle Stages, Transitions, and Product Expenditures," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (June), 27-42.

Yoon, Carolyn (1997), "Age Differences in Consumers' Processing Strategies: An Investigation of Moderating Influences," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (December), 329-42.

Zelizer, Viviana (2005), *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Table 2
Phase 1 Informant Profiles (Essay 2)

INFORMANT	DETAILS	SIBLINGS	PARENT	DETAILS
Leanne	female (69); married; administrative assistant; 3 grown children and 1 grandchild	one sister	mother (91)	mother in assisted living; searching for nursing home
Eva	female (63); married; 2 grown children and 1 grandchild	one sister	mother (90)	mother in granny suite at Eva's home
Bill	male (67); married; retired executive; 1 grown child	none	father (83)	father in nursing home
Debbie	female (62); married; retired teacher; 2 grown children and 1 grandchild	none	mother (89)	mother living with Debbie; searching for assisted living
Anne	female (62); married; real estate agent; 2 grown children and 2 grandchildren	two brothers, two sisters	mother (??) and father (??)	parents living on their own; searching for seniors' apartment
Diane	female (65); married; self-employed; 2 grown children and 1 grandchild	two brothers	mother (87)	mother living with Diane; searching for assisted living
Frank	male (61); married; self-employed; 5 grown children and 2 grandchildren	none	mother (90)	mother living on her own; searching for assisted living
Colleen	female (58); married; teacher; 2 grown children and 4 grandchildren	three sisters	mother (75)	mother living in nursing home
Stewart	male (60); married; teacher; 1 grown child	one brother	mother (88)	mother living on her own; searching for assisted living

Table 3
Phase 2 Informant Profiles (Essay 2)

FAMILY	MEMBERS	DETAILS
Brown	Mother: Frances (102)	widowed; lives in nursing home
	Late Father	deceased eighty years; had been living in seniors' apartment with Frances
	Son: Doug (65)	married; retired teacher; 3 grown children and 3 grandchildren
	Daughter: Dora (69)	married; nurse; 2 grown children and 2 grandchildren
Gray	Mother: Rebecca (92)	widowed; lives in seniors' apartment; looking for assisted living
	Late Father	deceased two years; had been living in nursing home
	Daughter: Nancy (65)	married; retired secretary; 3 grown children and 4 grandchildren
	Son: Norm (66)	married; retired professor; 1 grown child
	Other	members not interviewed: son Nick (62) lives out of province
Black	Mother: Olive (88)	married; lives in seniors' apartment; looking for a nursing home
	Father: Orville* (89)	living in nursing home
	Daughter: Julie (66)	married; retired counsellor; 2 grown children and 2 grandchildren
	Son: James (62)	married; lawyer; 2 grown children
White	Mother: Mary (85)	widowed; moving into assissted living next week
	Late Father	deceased one year; had been living in nursing home
	Daughter: Patty (52)	married; self-employed; 3 grown children and 3 grandchildren
	Daughter: Pam (59)	divorced; nurse; 1 grown child
	Daughter: Peggy (57)	married; nurse; 2 grown children and 4 grandchildren
	Other	members not interviewed: daughter Paula (54) lives out of province
Green	Mother: Eileen (85)	widowed; lives in nursing home
	Late Father	deceased one year; had been living in nursing home
	Daughter: Carol** (55)	divorced; homemaker and farmer; 4 grown children and 2 grandchildren
	Son: Conrad** (54)	divorced; police officer; 2 grown children
	Other	members not interviewed: son Tom (50), son Jake (47), son Brian (45) did not agree to be interviewed

*not interviewed
**not interviewed formally

Table 4
Family Backgrounds (Essay 2)

Family	Background
Brown	Frances and her late husband had raised their two children in a small city in Ontario, where Frances had been a homemaker and her husband had been a teacher. Their children have married and raised families of their own in nearby towns. About ten years ago, Frances and her husband had moved from their home into a seniors' apartment at the urging of Doug and Dora, who noticed that they were struggling to take care of the house. Driving was also a concern; the house was on the outskirts of the city, and Doug was very concerned about his father's driving. The move to the apartment was initially very difficult because Frances and her husband felt they were less independent. After two years, Frances' husband passed away from illness. He was admitted to a nursing home during the later stages of illness, and Frances moved into an assisted living facility that was adjoined to the nursing home in order to easily visit him every day. Not long after he passed away, Doug and his wife noticed that Frances was beginning to "fail," (e.g., spilling food on herself, very forgetful and absent-minded), and urged her to take the "next step" of moving to a nursing home. Frances, Doug, and Dora each stressed that Frances was in excellent health considering her age, but also noted that she needed a high degree of daily care. Frances' nursing home is a few blocks from Doug's home, and he sees her several times each week. Dora lives about forty minutes away, and sees her mother infrequently. Doug is displeased with his sister's lack of involvement in their mother's care, but Dora and Frances – while they do acknowledge that Doug is more involved – do not seem bothered by this. Doug and Dora do not have a close sibling relationship, but they communicate amicably over issues related to Frances.
Black	Olive and her husband raised their two children in a large city in Ontario. Olive had been a teacher and a homemaker, and her husband, Orville, had been a banker. James has stayed in the city to raise his own family, while Julie has moved to a small town about an hour away to raise her family. Olive currently lives in a seniors' apartment. Orville had lived with her until eight months ago, when he fell ill. Olive had struggled to care for him in the apartment, and consulted her children when she determined it was time for him to move to a nursing home. Orville had resisted initially, but Olive reported that he is more comfortable there than he would be at home. Julie, who is retired, spends two nights a week at Olive's house, where she helps Olive run errands, visit doctors, visit Orville, etc. Julie, James, and Olive each noted the close and special relationship between Julie and Olive. James is also close with his parents. He visits his father every Tuesday, and has dinner at this mother's every Sunday.
White	Mary and her late husband had raised their four daughters in a medium sized city in Ontario. Mary had been a homemaker, and her husband had worked in the military. Three of their daughters, now grown, live with their own families in and around the city, while the fourth daughter and her family live several hours away. Mary was making plans to move into a nearby assisted living residence within the week, and she and her daughters were making arrangements to sell her house. Mary's late husband had passed away one year ago after living in a nursing home for several months due to a stroke. Mary and her daughters noted that he had insisted in staying in his own home while his health deteriorated, and this had put a huge strain on Mary, who was his primary caregiver for two years. The decision to move him to a nursing home had been very difficult for everyone because he had been "fiercely independent", but there was consensus that it was best for Mary. Mary is looking forward to meeting and making friends at her new residence, and to continued visits with her children and grandchildren. Multigenerational family gatherings were of great importance to Mary and her daughters; the family assembled regularly for meals and celebrations, and Mary made an annual trip to Alberta to visit her surviving brothers and sisters. Mary and her daughters each noted that there was some disagreement about decisions over her late husband's care, the preparation and selling of the family home, disposition of Mary's possessions, which assisted living residence would be best, and which daughter would drive Mary to doctors' appointments, shopping, banking, etc. However, each woman stressed the importance of "keeping the peace," and did her best to diffuse any tensions within the family.

Green	Eileen and her late husband had raised their seven children on a farm in Ontario. Eileen had trained in a convent in Ireland, and had abruptly emigrated prior to taking her vows. She married a farmer in Canada, and became a mother and homemaker while working on the farm. Eileen's husband had fallen ill three years earlier. After caring for him at home, Eileen ultimately determined that the demands of daily care-giving were too much for her, and admitted him to a nursing home. He passed away one year ago, at the same time that Eileen found herself struggling with living alone. She and her children had several heated conversations about where Eileen should live. One of her sons was adamant that she not move into residential care, and Eileen moved in with him and his family. This arrangement was deemed to be dysfunctional for everyone involved, including the siblings who felt Eileen would have been most comfortable in a nursing home. Carol and Conrad noted that the period of time leading up to Eileen moving to the nursing home was very challenging on the relationships between the siblings. Presently, Conrad and Carol see their mother very regularly, and their siblings visit infrequently. Conrad and Carol have a close relationship; they and their respective families see each other often, and they were explicit in their belief that close family ties are very desirable. Both revealed sadness that they were not close with the other five siblings. Carol has very close relationships with her children and grandchildren; she regularly visits or Skypes with them. Similarly, Conrad is close with his children, although Carol noted that she disapproved of how Conrad showed favouratism toward his oldest son.
Gray	Rebecca and her late husband had raised their three children in Halifax, where Rebecca had been a homemaker and her husband had worked in the military. Their daughter, Nancy, who has children and grandchildren of her own, moved to a small town in Ontario when she married. Nancy's brother, Norm, had moved to Montreal when he married, and her youngest brother has remained in Halifax. Five years ago, Rebecca's children noticed that she and her husband were beginning to struggle with maintaining their home, managing their finances, and with their general health. Nancy and Norm urged their parents to move close to Norm or Nancy. After some deliberation, Rebecca and her husband decided to move into a seniors' apartment a few blocks away from Nancy. Rebecca's husband suffered a stroke after two years, and was eventually admitted to a nursing home after Rebecca could no longer provide daily care for him. At present, he has been deceased for two years, and Rebecca is looking for a suitable assisted living residence in the community. Nancy visits Rebecca daily, and they are very close. Norm visits twice a year, and the three appear to have a warm family relationship. The brother in Halifax was rarely mentioned except to say that he has a very demanding career. Nancy and Rebecca look forward to Norm's visits, and keep in touch throughout the rest of the year through email and Skype.

CHAPTER 4: BUYING THE GIRLFRIEND EXPERIENCE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE CONSUMPTION EXPERIENCES OF MALE CUSTOMERS OF ESCORTS

This article has been published[5] and appears here with permission. Refer to Appendix A.

> *Cuddling and talking – we shared interests, but most importantly, she made me feel like there was no other place she would rather be in that moment in time. (Lub, Montreal)*

The informant who posted this comment is not referring to his wife or girlfriend, but to an encounter with a female sex worker – an escort – with whom he shared a particular type of commercial sex encounter known as the girlfriend experience (GFE). As the focus of this paper, the GFE differs from other types of commercial sex encounters in that it involves more than the exchange of money for sex; in order to derive the true value of the GFE, the male customer must not only pay the sex worker, but must also provide her with sexual pleasure and emotional intimacy. The result is that the encounter feels, to him, more like a romantic encounter with a girlfriend than straight-up sex. For an hour or two, or perhaps an entire evening, the customer indulges in his fantasies of a romantic encounter with a legitimate girlfriend and seeks to be perceived as a nice guy by the escort. This context provides the basis for an examination of the ways in which consumers engage in a form of consumption that has been largely overlooked by consumer researchers, and how consumers experience the blurring of boundaries between purely transactional service encounters and those that entail a deeper connection between

---

[5] Huff, Aimee Dinnin, (2011) "Buying the Girlfriend Experience: An Exploration of the Consumption Experiences of Male Customers of Escorts," in *Research in Consumer Behavior, Volume 13*, ed. Russell W. Belk, Albert Muñiz, Hope Jensen Schau and Kent Grayson, Emerald, 111-126

provider and consumer. In addition to shedding light on this consumption context in the form of description, I seek to illuminate some aspects of GFE consumption that are theoretically interesting (beyond the context itself) to consumer researchers in general and to Consumer Culture Theory researchers in particular.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the experiences of male customers of escorts who provide GFE. In doing so, I offer a deeper understanding of the consumption of covert pleasure, consumer fantasies, and the ways in which consumers co-create value in the consumption experience. While different forms of prostitution exist, I am explicitly concerned with indoor prostitution, which encompasses call-girls, escort services, and massage parlor workers. The motivation for this focus is two-fold. First, there is substantially less research on indoor prostitution, in comparison with street prostitution. Second, and more important for this consumer research, "indoor [commercial sex] interactions are typically longer, multifaceted, and more reciprocal" than interactions between street prostitutes and their customers (Weitzer, 2009, p. 220). Therefore, the experiences of male customers of indoor prostitutes are more likely to be characteristic of a romantic, intimate encounter with a partner (Malarek, 2009; Sanders, 2008), and therefore be of greater curiosity to consumer researchers interested in the blurring of boundaries between commercial transactions and social relationships. Further, I take a rather narrow perspective on sex work. I am explicitly concerned with consumption of prostitution services in a context where use of such services is legal, and I choose to focus on a context where sex workers are more likely to be employed of their own free will (Weitzer, 2009). Accordingly, I study johns in Canada, where the exchange of money for sex is not prohibited by law, and I study prostitution services provided by independently

employed women who are less likely to have been forced into the industry by a third party. I acknowledge, however, that the sex industry is plagued by a host of legal, moral, and social issues, and that this study does not attempt to explore these aspects of the sex industry in any depth.

PROSTITUTION AND THE GIRLFRIEND EXPERIENCE

The sex industry in North America is, no doubt, large. However, due to the illicit and/or secretive nature of producing or consuming within this industry, it is not possible to accurately estimate the figures related to revenues, frequency and type of interactions, or number and type of people involved. Monto (2004), in his review of sex research, suggests that approximately 15-20% of American men have visited a prostitute in their lifetime, and payments can range from a few dollars for a brief interaction with a street prostitute to several hundred or thousands of dollars for an evening with a reputable call-girl (Malarek, 2009). Research on prostitution has primarily focused on the supply side (i.e., the prostitutes themselves), and devoted substantially less attention to the customers (i.e., the johns) (Holt and Blevins, 2007; Weitzer, 2000). In this section I review literature on indoor prostitution, johns, and the GFE.

Indoor Prostitution

Indoor prostitutes, in comparison with their streetwalking counterparts, generally operate in private premises or in hotels rather than in cars, parks or alleys; charge higher prices; are less likely to be exploited by third parties; are less likely to be victims of violence; have little or no public visibility in their course of work; and report higher

levels of job satisfaction and self-esteem – assuming that they have not been forced into prostitution (Weitzer, 2009). Indoor prostitutes are typically independently employed, and customers contact them directly through their web pages and advertisements, or through a referral system, agency, or madam.

Broadly speaking, interactions between customers and indoor prostitutes are more likely to involve conversation, affection, and reciprocal sexual pleasure than are interactions between customers and street prostitutes (Lever and Dolnick, 2000). This is reflective of the broad trends in late modern society, where emotional intimacy has become a critical component of the exchange in commercial sex work (Frank, 2002). This emotional intimacy, however, is temporally bound by the duration of the service encounter, creating a form of bounded authenticity; indoor sex workers seek to provide an "authentic emotional and physical connection" with customers, but this connection is necessarily contained within the short-term transaction (Bernstein, 2007, p. 193). With the exception of some ethnographic work (Frank, 2002), and mainstream media reports (McLaren, 2010), there remains a lack of understanding of the ways that indoor sex work evokes and involves the fantasies and pleasure of male customers, particularly as these fantasies relate to emotional intimacy and romance as opposed to specific sexual acts.

The Johns

Research on johns often does not discriminate between customers of street prostitutes and of indoor prostitutes (e.g., Holt & Blevins, 2007; Malarek, 2009). Johns are typically male and employed (Monto, 2004), but there is otherwise considerable variation among them. They can be young or old, married or single, professional or blue-

collar, outgoing or shy, liberal or conservative, et cetera (Lowman and Atchison, 2009; Macleod et al., 2008; Sawyer et al., 2001). However, while the typical john does not exist in terms of personal profile, (Holzman and Pines, 1990; Malarek, 2009), Monto (2004) cautions that characterizing johns as normal can reinforce the cultural myths that paying for sex is a normal part of masculine sexuality. In fact, only a minority of men ever seek the services of a prostitute (Monto, 2004), and those who do are generally very concerned with keeping their "dirty little secret" from the "real world" (Malarek, 2009, p. 184).

Prior research has shown that johns' motivations include the desire for specific types of sexual experiences (e.g., acts/behaviors, physical characteristics of a partner), the thrill of an illicit behavior, the desire to avoid the commitment or attachment required in conventional intimate relationships, or the desire to overcome personal difficulties in meeting new partners (Monto, 2000; Weitzer, 2005). In fact, many johns place a high value on commercial sexual encounters that are infused with romance and intimacy – such as the GFE, which entails affection, conversation, and more generous amounts of time than sex alone (Malarek, 2009).

Use of indoor prostitution involves an interesting overlap between economic exchange and interpersonal relationships in a consumption context. Sanders (2008, p. 401) found that the traditional male sexual script – a "set of shared conventions based on mutual dependency" – was evident in the relationships between regular clients and escort workers. In many ways, the commercial sexual relationship was qualitatively similar to conventional intimate relationships in terms of emotions, behavior, and commitment (Sanders, 2008). This is consistent with prior research on johns, which revealed johns' propensities to consciously foster a good rapport with escorts during sexual encounters

(Holzman and Pines, 1990), and supports the notion that commercial sexual relations can be characterized by physical *and* emotional intimacy (Zelizer, 2005). Recent research on escort workers has shown that customers actively seek emotional connection; physical intimacy is no longer sufficient, and customers desire elements of emotional intimacy that are traditionally characteristic of socially legitimate relationships, such as dating and courtship (Bernstein, 2007; McLaren, 2010). However, this exchange is a short-term phenomenon, and "one of the chief virtues of commercial sexual exchange is that the encounter is clear and bounded" (Bernstein, 2007, p. 193). That is, the emotional and physical connection fills an intermediate space between physical pleasure and authentic, romantic relationships (Frank, 2002).

The Girlfriend Experience (GFE)

The GFE has emerged as a commercial experience that blurs the boundaries between a financial transaction and a romantic relationship (Bernstein, 2007). Within the sex industry, "GFE" is a common term for a type of sexual encounter in which both the escort and the john are willing to engage in reciprocal sexual pleasure and some degree of emotional intimacy. Not all escorts provide GFE, and not all johns want GFE. Escorts that do offer GFE explicitly advertise GFE on their web pages and advertisements, although the nuances of what constitutes GFE are debated by escorts and johns alike. In this research, I have chosen to focus my inquiry on GFE because it necessarily involves more than a simple exchange of money for sex; johns who seek GFE are looking for a sexual experience where they must provide emotional intimacy and pleasure *in addition to* monetary payment for service.

METHOD

The research question guiding this study is: what are the consumers' experiences in this context? I began by attempting to describe how johns experience, think about, and reflect on the GFE. I then sought to advance this descriptive account by making linkages to extant consumer research.

To address the research question, I gathered data from personal interviews and from a purely observational netnography. I sought Canadian informants for both stages of data collection, because prostitution – in and of itself – is legal in Canada. (There are illegal related aspects, as in "communicating for the purposes of prostitution" and "operating a common bawdy house," but paying money for sex is not illegal). Informants for interviews were recruited using ads on Craigslist and a weekly entertainment newspaper that is published online and in print, both of which are based in Toronto. These sites were used because they both commonly advertise escort services. Interviews took place over Skype and typically lasted about 2 hours.

The netnographic stage of data collection was conducted at the same time as the interviews. Using the approaches for data collection and analysis prescribed by Kozinets (2010), I explored online discussion forums wherein men discussed the experiences they had had with escorts, and I viewed ads for escort services. The websites were operated by informal escort review boards in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. One American escort review site was also used. I selected discussion boards where the term "GFE" was used, reviewed hundreds of postings, and catalogued those postings that were particularly insightful and illuminating. Data analysis involved iterative processes of coding, comparison, and tacking back and forth between theory and data.

I elected to supplement the interview data with netnographic data because the online conversations between johns were particularly revealing of the experiential aspects of GFE consumption. As a female researcher, I found that the interview data lacked the same degree of richness; johns were very open about their experiences, but did not speak at length or unprompted about GFE. The netnographic data provided much more vivid insight into johns' experiences with GFE by allowing for an understanding of this consumption experience within its appropriate social context (Goulding, 2003), and, as the project has developed, I used interviews to refine and enhance the netnographic findings. Additional data collection, analysis, and peer debriefing are ongoing.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized around three central consumption themes: covert pleasure, co-creation of value, and consumer fantasies. Before presenting these findings, I more explicitly address what constitutes GFE in order to better contextualize the data.

As noted earlier, there is considerable debate among escorts and johns as to what constitutes GFE. The details are important to both parties because escorts' web pages and advertisements are very explicit in regard to the acts and services that the individual escort will provide. These details are provided in the form of acronyms, and they function to manage expectations of the customers. For example, an escort may indicate that her services include light French kissing ("LFK"), deep French kissing ("DFK"), or no kissing at all (no acronym would appear).

Specific acts that involve sexual pleasure for the escort, as well as unprotected sexual acts, are characteristically associated with GFE. However, the data analysis

indicated that most johns believe that these services, alone, are not sufficient to constitute a GFE. For example, one john notes that GFE is not defined by the "physical things [e.g., specific services provided by the escort, as indicated by acronyms] but rather the connection, the emotional side we call the illusion of passion" (Das, USA). Another john states, "to me, GFE isn't just about the activities. It is about the feeling/emotional part of the session – real or not" (Bub, USA). The debate over what constitutes GFE hinges on the ideal combination of specific acts and the intangible nature of the emotional connection between the two parties – even if both parties are cognizant that the emotional connection is not legitimate in the same way that it is between conventional sexual partners. Further, these debates clearly indicate that johns typically have more difficulty describing exactly what comprises the emotional component of the GFE, and even more difficulty discerning from an escort's web page whether she is able to provide an acceptable degree of emotional connection. As a result, many johns' discussion forums are devoted to evaluating specific escorts' abilities or inclinations to provide this intangible component of GFE.

Covert Pleasure

GFE is defined by covert pleasure – a combination of emotional and physical intimacy in a context where consumption is socially contentious, and often kept secret. In consumer research, pleasure has been conceptualized as hedonic and involving intensely emotional experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Prior consumer research on pleasure has generally focused on the social nature of pleasure, and revealed how pleasure is intensified when it is experienced collectively (Belk and Costa, 1998;

154

Goulding et al., 2009). In contrast, in this study I explore how consumers experience pleasure when it is consumed alone and in a decidedly non-collective context, and I focus on the ways in which the pleasurable and secretive aspects of the GFE interact to create a satisfying consumption experience.

My informants describe their experiences with GFE with an emphasis on the emotional and hedonic aspects of the encounters, rather than on the explicitly sexual nature of the encounter. For example, Zed (Toronto) spoke at length about his desire to form an "ongoing connection" with an escort, because "sex is better with feelings; otherwise I might as well be doing a couch!" He seeks GFEs that are "less mechanical" and feel more like dating. Thus, the hedonic appeal of the GFE involves more than sexual release for the john; it necessarily entails a significant degree of emotional pleasure, which is derived as the john forms an emotional connection with the escort and is able to provide her with physical pleasure.

As it relates to consumption experiences, pleasure can become cyclical – the consumer can derive pleasure from anticipating, experiencing, and reflecting on the encounter (Le Bel and Dube, 1998). This is also clear in the data. For example, one informant presented his list of criteria for a GFE:

> *1. You await her arrival with slightly nervous anticipation.*
> *2. When she arrives, you can feel almost immediately that you've made the right choice.*
> *3. She seems to enjoy it as much as you do.*
> *4. You lose track of time and never look at the clock.*
> *5. The session is over far too soon.*
> *6. You're sorry to see her leave. (I know some guys joke that we pay them to leave, but I don't feel that way at all with a GFE escort.)*
> *7. It didn't feel at all like you paid for it.*
> *8. You can't wait to see her again.*
> *Having said all that, to me, it's never a GFE without [French kissing and other reciprocal physical pleasure]. (Rev, Montreal)*

155

Rev reveals that he derives pleasure before, during, and after the GFE, and that part of pleasure is intertwined with the more physical pleasure associated the sexual activities. Another informant notes that it is the combination of physical and erotic connection that makes a GFE so appealing, and confesses that the emotional intimacy is addictive – so much so that he wonders if he should focus instead on sexual release:

> I see the almost constant refrain of GFE being about a list of acronyms, a series of physical activities. That is not what the GFE experience is about. [GFE] is an experience one walks away from momentarily physically satisfied but almost immediately mentally disappointed. It is an experience after which one truly asks himself if masturbation is not a more efficient means to an end. (Jag, USA)

GFE is pleasurable for the john, but it is also a covert form of consumption. By this I mean that the consumption of prostitution services is typically a secret endeavor because it is socially contentious and carries some degree of physical risk. I refrain from using the term "dark side" of consumption in order to avoid value judgments, but I do acknowledge that the use of prostitution services certainly constitutes a cultural taboo. The covert nature of the consumption is not unimportant, because it adds to the overall hedonic appeal. This is consistent with prior research on strip club patrons, who experienced a hedonic rush from engaging in behavior that was considered taboo, even though not illegal (Frank, 2002).

I find that there are two dimensions to the secretive nature of GFE consumption: cultural taboo and physical risk. The vast majority of johns do not make their behavior known to their family or friends, and are fully aware of the socially contentious use of

prostitution, regardless of whether they are in countries where it is legal or illegal

(Malarek, 2009). For example, Zed's friends do not know that he sees escorts: "I keep it

REALLY discreet;" he is not prepared for his peers to judge him for his choices.

Similarly, many johns acknowledge that the online discussion forums are the only places

they feel comfortable sharing their views and experiences with escorts. Indeed, discretion

is a hallmark of the industry, for johns and escorts alike (McLaren, 2010).

In addition to the taboo of prostitution, GFE consumption involves secrecy related

to risk-taking in a physical sense. Many GFE activities involve risk to the escort and the

john in the form of kissing and other unprotected sexual activities, and many johns

express concerns with taking risks with their physical health:

> *Worry about yourself and decide your own level of risk. A condom can break*
>
> *during [sex]. That could be the one time you get screwed. All promiscuous*
>
> *behaviour has a high level of risk. The average [escort] sees between 2-5 guys a*
>
> *day. If you're that worried about an STI, get a girlfriend or get married. This is a*
>
> *high risk hobby. (Geo, Vancouver)*

Other johns acknowledge the risk, but also reveal that the risk is an essential component

of the pleasure associated with GFE:

> *Man it's the truth. We are all living on the edge, myself included with my selfish*
>
> *[desire to receive unprotected oral sex]. But it's like Travolta in Pulp Fiction*
>
> *when he says "Yeah...but steak tastes good!" (Nyl, Montreal)*

Thus, the social taboo and physical risks play a large role in GFE consumption,

and are closely intertwined with the pleasurable aspects (Celsi et al., 1993). These

157

findings are consistent with prior research on illicit pleasure, which found that service providers can still effectively provide pleasure within legally prohibited consumption spheres (Goulding et al., 2009). I expand on this by revealing that the pleasurable and covert dimensions of GFE are key components of consumption. The thrill of GFE is a flow experience; the john's total immersion in the high-risk context provides a cathartic and highly satisfying end state, which he seeks to experience again and which he seeks to master (Celsi et al., 1993).

Co-Creating The Experience

Deriving value – in the form of emotional and physical pleasure – from the GFE requires the john to give more than money. He is compelled to give a short-term commitment of emotional and physical intimacy, and he becomes accountable for his own level of pleasure in the consumption experience. That is, he derives pleasure from ensuring that the escort has a pleasurable experience, and from adequately performing his role in the GFE such that he can form a temporary emotional connection with her. I explore this phenomenon from the perspective of service-dominant logic and value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

In this context, value is experientially determined, and has a phenomenological nature; it can be conceptualized as the consumer's perceptions or higher-level needs that are met when he establishes a connection between himself and the service provider (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The escort, as a service provider, mobilizes a set of knowledge and skills in the service encounter. The john, then, interacts with her in such a way that he derives value-in-use; he functions as an active participant in the value creation process (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). In this way, GFE differs from most other types of commercial

158

sex encounters, which tend to focus on male sexual release in exchange for money.

Zed makes a primitive contrast between these more commercial transactions and co-created value in the GFE. In his experiences, escorts who do not provide true GFE are not capable of providing him with the experience he is looking for: "you're nothing but a client to them, so it's more like business as opposed to intimacy." In an intimate GFE, Zed looks for clues that the escort is comfortable: "you notice little things like she's enjoying herself, not really watching the clock or anything like that, is pretty open in terms of what she is and isn't comfortable with." It is important to him that she enjoys herself, both physically and emotionally, "otherwise there's really no fun in it. I might as well take matters into my own hand!"

Thus, the consumer takes an active role in co-creating value during the consumption experience (Payne et al., 2008). He is obliged to take responsibility for his own overall pleasure by striving to perform his role in the encounter. Many informants stress the importance of reciprocal pleasure in GFE, because the value of the experience is contingent upon the john being able to help the escort enjoy herself.

> *In the GFE I seek, I especially enjoy caring, high-touch intimacy, stroking, massaging, holding her, caressing her, trying to relate to her inner spirit via tender touch, not a body to have sex with. (Dev, Calgary)*

GFE requires emotional and physical effort on the part of the john. Some johns explicitly state that "GFE to me is only when a girl [reaches orgasm]" (Per, Toronto). Others are more vague, but clearly indicate their concern for the escort to enjoy herself:

159

If there aren't certain activities [where the john provides physical pleasure to the escort] and a sincere connection between the two of us, the feeling won't be there and the session won't be a GFE. (Blu, USA)

Johns are acutely aware that the pleasure from GFE is a function of their own efforts and those of the escort. That is, the co-creation of value hinges on the consumer functioning as a co-producer of the service (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). It is not surprising, then, that the words "sensuality" and "intimacy" are used frequently as johns talk about GFE, because these qualities of the consumption experience cannot be achieved based on the efforts of one party alone. One informant elaborates on these terms, and reveals his desire to be an active participant in the encounter. He contrasts GFE with PSE (porn star experience), which is defined as focusing solely on male sexual pleasure: "I love the sensuality [of the GFE] – kissing, touching, exploration, mutual arousal, mental stimulation, a bit wild sex – but not PSE!" (Xap, Montreal). Another informant is more explicit about his own role in the GFE: "I believe having GFE is as dependent on the [john] as the girl. If you're not as presentable and thoughtful as she is, then your mileage may vary even with girls who truly [offer] GFE" (Mak, Montreal).

The escort and the john have roles that both require and enable them to create value together (Payne et al., 2008). Consistent with the concept of value-in-use, the escort proposes value through her marketplace offerings, and the john perpetuates the value creation during the consumption experience (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Following from this, I use the context of GFE consumption to dig deeper into consumers' reflexive accounts of their roles in the value creation process.

Consumer Fantasies

Immersion in the fantasy of the girlfriend is critical to the GFE. As he works to perform and co-create value from the experience, the consumer engages in a temporary escape from reality, wherein the norms of everyday life are suspended (Goulding et al., 2009). The fantasy revolves around a romanticized notion of what a girlfriend is, not the reality (Belk and Costa, 1998). Many johns note – often humorously – that "real" girlfriends are nothing like GFE. Rather, the GFE allows the john to experience the benefits of having a romantic girlfriend without "all the drama:" an escort offering GFE merely:

> *…has to capture the fantasy of the girlfriend. If the reality was so great, the*
> *demand for GFE services would decline dramatically. Half the men using escorts*
> *are married and looking for what isn't happening at home." (Sem, Montreal)*

The pleasurable and hedonic aspects of consumption have been linked to mastery of a leisure pursuit, meaning that good performance begets good performance (Holbrook, Chestnut, Oliva, & Greenleaf, 1984). In this context, the more adept the john becomes at immersing himself in the fantasy and performing his role in the GFE, the more value he derives from the experience, and the better he performs in subsequent GFEs. Many johns report actively striving to separate fantasy from reality in order to fully immerse themselves in pleasure. For example, Jay readily acknowledges that GFE can allow him to temporarily escape reality:

> *Attitude is the most important thing. If the woman is skilled and caring enough*
> *about what she does, and can make me think that I am the centre of her universe*
> *even for a very brief time, then to me that is the GFE. It's all about the fantasy. I*

can pretend for a short time that this hot and responsive woman really cares

about me, but at no time do I lose sight of the reality. (Jay, Toronto; italics

original).

Similarly, Zed is fully aware that his GFEs are an indulgence in fantasy: "at the end of the day you know what both parties are in it for, so exchanging cash (or, more like me handing over the cash) isn't a big deal." His temporary escapes from reality are "mostly a mental thing," where he can immerse himself in a fantasy world. Johns are aware that the encounter is structured by a commercial transaction, but seek escorts who can help them to immerse in a short-term fantasy.

Other johns note, repeatedly, that much of the appeal of the GFE is that "we pay them to leave." Thus, the GFE is a necessarily short-term fantasy relationship:

No, it's not reality, it's fantasy. She's not your real girlfriend and you are not her

real boyfriend but you both should be able to have the basic human emotions to

play out the fantasy that you are boyfriend/girlfriend. If you treat her as your

girlfriend she should in kind return that. If you treat her like a grocery list of

sexual items, then don't be pissed when she treats you as a walking ATM machine

and vice versa! Just remember that when the time is up, it was just a grand

orgasmic fantasy! (Nic, USA)

Gus (Toronto) stresses that the real GFE providers can provide an "illusion of passion and are a delight to be with." He seeks GFE encounters that are believably passionate and where he can immerse himself in the fantasy during the encounter. The alternative is the encounter where the escort is obviously acting: "there is a huge

difference between being with a GFE 'illusion of passion' versus being with a 'mattress actress.' The former is to be treasured while the latter is to be avoided at all costs" (Gus, Toronto). Prior research has shown that leisure and fantasy are intertwined in consumption contexts that are characterized as artificial and which have explicit roles for actors (Fitchett, 2004). However, even though johns are conscious that GFE is a performance on the part of both parties, they are generally intolerant of sub-standard performances on the part of the escort. If the escort is perceived to be unwilling or unable to adequately perform her role, the john's pleasure becomes compromised.

In this realm of fantasy, consumers derive pleasure from mastering the challenges associated with the consumption itself (Belk and Costa, 1998). Johns become more skilled at performing their own roles, and at choosing escorts who are able to perform the role of girlfriend. If and as the johns become more skilled in these regards, they can maximize their pleasure by fully immersing themselves in the consumption experience (Celsi et al., 1993).

DISCUSSION

In this study of GFE consumption, I seek to establish some preliminary connections between a rather novel context and three existing streams of consumer research. These connections provide the basis for further development of this project and for future research in related areas. It will be imperative for additional research to move beyond supporting these existing research streams to presenting more refined theoretical developments. In this section, I discuss how this study might be further developed in ways that would be interesting to consumer researchers.

A descriptive analysis of the data allows for a broader understanding of experiential consumption in general, with a focus on how consumers engage in play and fantasy in order to derive pleasure (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook et al., 1984). I also establish a link between the secretive dimension of GFE consumption and the pleasure derived from the experience. The covert nature of some forms of consumption has been largely overlooked in the literature, and a deeper understanding of how johns manage and experience consumption in a secretive context might shed light on other forms of consumption that are marked by strong social norms, stigma, and regulation. Further, there are developments to be made in regard to high-risk leisure consumption, including how consumers negotiate, normalize, and justify risk-taking.

In this study, I am also able to explore context effects in value creation. I explore how resources and contextual elements that are not under control of the service provider or the consumer can play a role in how value is derived (Vargo et al., 2008), and develop some connections between value co-creation, consumer fantasies, and pleasure. However, while a CCT approach is useful for understanding "how consumers perform service with firm-provided offerings" (Arnould, 2006, p. 294), additional work is required to establish an innovative contribution to the co-creation literature.

An additional avenue for development is the blurring of boundaries between socially legitimate intimate relationships and economic exchange. The study of johns' use of GFE is particularly well suited to an exploration of how and why consumers turn to the marketplace to purchase relationships that are traditionally associated with interpersonal rather than transactional distinctions.

On a more practical note, it would be informative to focus on the ways in which

164

GFE consumption differs in accordance with the legal status of prostitution. A cross-cultural examination of johns' experiences might reveal some interesting dimensions of consumption as it relates to regulatory issues, and there may be some commonalities between this context and others that are also more contemporary social issues (e.g., gun ownership, recreational drug use).

REFERENCES

Arnould, E. J. (2006), "Service-dominant logic and consumer culture theory: natural allies in an emerging paradigm", in Belk, R. W. and Sherry, J. F. J. (Ed.), Research in Consumer Behavior: Consumer Culture Theory, Elsevier, San Diego.

Belk, R. W., & Costa, J. A. (1998), "The mountain man myth: a contemporary consuming fantasy", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 25 (December), pp. 218-240.

Bernstein, E. (2007), "Buying and selling the 'girlfriend experience': the social and subjective contours of market intimacy", in Padilla, M. B., Hirsch, J. S. Hirsch, Munoz-Laboy, M., Sember, R. E. and Parker, R. G. (Ed.), Love and Globalization: Transformations of Intimacy in the Contemporary World, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, TN.

Celsi, R. L., Rose, R. L., & Leigh, T. W. (1993), "An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 20 (June), pp. 1-23.

Fitchett, J. A. (2004), "The fantasies, orders and roles of sadistic consumption: game shows and the service encounter", Consumption, Markets & Culture, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 285-306.

Frank, K. (2002), G-Strings and Sympathy: Strip Club Regulars and Male Desire, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Goulding, C. (2003), "Issues in representing the postmodern consumer", Qualitative Market Research - An International Journal, Vol. 6 No. 3, pp. 152-159.

Goulding, C., Shankar, A., Elliott, R., & Canniford, R. (2009), "The marketplace management of illicit pleasure", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 35 (February), pp. 759-771.

Holbrook, M. B., Chestnut, R. W., Oliva, T. A., & Greenleaf, E. A. (1984), "Play as a consumption experience: the roles of emotions, performance, and personality in the enjoyment of games", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 11 (September), pp. 728-739.

Holbrook, M. B., & Hirschman, E. C. (1982), "The experiential aspects of consumption: consumer fantasies, feelings, and fun", Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 9 (September), pp. 132-140.

Holt, T. J., & Blevins, K. R. (2007), "Examining sex work from the client's perspective: assessing johns using on-line data", Deviant Behavior, Vol. 28, pp. 333-354.

Holzman, H. R., & Pines, S. (1990), "Buying sex: the phenomenology of being a john", in C. D. Bryant (Ed.), Deviant Behavior, Hemisphere Publishing Corp., New York.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010), Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Le Bel, J. L., & Dube, L. (1998), "Understanding pleasures: source, experience, and remembrances", in Alba, Joseph W. and Hutchinson, J. Wesley (Ed.), Advances in Consumer Research, Vol. 25, Association for Consumer Research, Provo, UT.

Lever, J., & Dolnick, D. (2000), "Clients and call girls: seeking sex and intimacy", in Weitzer, R. J. (Ed.), Sex For Sale, Routledge, New York.

Lowman, J., & Atchison, C. (2009), "Men who buy sex: a survey in the greater Vancouver regional district", Canadian Review of Sociology, Vol. 43 No. 3, pp. 281-296.

Macleod, J., Farley, M., Anderson, L., & Golding, J. (2008), Challenging Men's Demand for Prostitution in Scotland, Women's Support Project, Glasgow.

Malarek, V. (2009), The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It, Key Porter Books, Toronto.

McLaren, L. (2010), "The secret life of a Bay Street hooker," Toronto Life, December, http://www.torontolife.com/daily/hype/print-edition/2010/12/08/the-secret-life-of-a-bay-street-hooker/, accessed 8 September 2011.

Monto, M. A. (2000), "Why men seek out prostitutes", in Weitzer, R. J. (Ed.), Sex For Sale, Routledge, New York.

Monto, M. A. (2004), "Female prostitution, customers, and violence", Violence Against Women, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 160-188.

Payne, A. F., Storbacka, K., & Frow, P. (2008), "Managing the co-creation of value," Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 36, pp. 83-96.

Sanders, T. (2008), "Male sexual scripts: intimacy, sexuality and pleasure in the purchase of commercial sex", Sociology, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 400-417.

Sawyer, S., Metz, M. E., Hinds, J. D., & Brucker, R. A., Jr. (2001), "Attitudes towards prostitution among males: a 'consumers' report'", Current Psychology, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 363-376.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004), "Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing", Journal of Marketing, Vol. 68 (January), pp. 1-17.

Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008), "Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution", Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Vol. 36, pp. 1-10.

Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008), "On value and value co-creation: a service systems and service logic perspective", European Management Journal,

Vol. 26, pp. 145-152.

Weitzer, R. (2005), "New directions in research on prostitution", Crime, Law & Social Change, Vol. 43, pp. 211-235.

Weitzer, R. (2009), "Sociology of sex work", Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 35, pp. 213-234.

Weitzer, R. J. (2000), "Why we need more research on sex work", in Weitzer, R. J. (Ed.), Sex for Sale, Routledge, New York.

Zelizer, V. (2005), The Purchase of Intimacy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

CHAPTER 5: FINAL THOUGHTS

The goal of this thesis was to develop a deep understanding of consumers'

experiences as they purchase care and intimacy from the marketplace. I have also sought

to extend this understanding of consumer experience into theoretical areas in consumer

research related to family consumption, and cultural influences on consumption. To this

end, I have examined three contexts where individuals and groups within families turn to

the marketplace to consume commercial care and intimacy. In this chapter, I will

explicate the contributions of the thesis as a whole, describe how these contributions

might provide the foundation for a broader theory of outsourcing care/intimacy, and

explore limitations and directions for future research.

CONTRIBUTIONS

In this thesis, I have developed empirical support for the notion that the sharing of

intimacy and care is a fundamental part of how families enact family; the performance of

behaviours and communications between members in ways that support the idea of

family, including the exchanging and sharing of care and intimacy, is a defining feature

of a family (DeVault 1991; Hochschild 2003). I go on to demonstrate that when requisite

aspects of care and intimacy are acquired from the marketplace, rather than produced

within the family, consumers can struggle to incorporate these commercial offerings into

their enactments of family. One of the primary contributions of this thesis is the

illumination of how part of this struggle is related to Western cultural norms. In each

context of this thesis, the care and intimacy under study are commonly produced within

families, and in our Western culture we would hold intra-familial production of childcare,

169

elder care, and romantic/sexual intimacy to be the ideal. The consequence of these cultural conditions is that paying for childcare, elder care, and/or romantic/sexual intimacy is generally regarded as problematic, to some degree. This creates a rich cultural backdrop for studying consumption of care and intimacy, and serves as a powerful reminder that examination of consumer phenomena should include attention to cultural influences on consumption.

In the first study, I reveal that cultural conceptions of the ideal mother complicate childcare consumption even for mothers who truly enjoy their careers and have found excellent childcare for their children. In the second study, I demonstrate that our cultural focus on living independently from other adult family members plays a key role in families' rather reluctant use of commercial elder care services. And, in the third study, I establish that our cultural perspective of commercial sex as taboo, and the consequential secretive nature of its consumption, are dominant factors in consumer pleasure in this context. By attending to the relevant cultural conditions across each context, I reveal that the meanings ascribed to consumption phenomena by culture can shape consumption in positive, negative, and benign ways.

Prior research has demonstrated that shared cultural meanings are rooted in the underlying social structure and that they can allow for social order and individual action to be organized (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Thompson and Haytko 1997). These shared meanings are manifestations of the underlying cultural ideologies, and are reflected in consumers' discourses (i.e., narratives, everyday language) (Kozinets 2008; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). These cultural meanings are not necessarily fixed, and multiple (and sometimes competing) discourses may exist relative to a particular ideology

(Fischer, Otnes, and Tuncay 2007; Kozinets 2008). Much consumer research on ideologies and discourses has examined how individuals draw on ideologies in their identity work by focusing on gender performance, tensions between ideologies, or marketplace myths and tensions (e.g., Holt and Thompson 2004; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Thompson and Haytko 1997). I build on this body of research by illuminating the ways that cultural ideologies influence how family is performed through the marketplace, identifying ways in which conceptions of "should" contrast with conceptions of what is best for the individual, and highlighting the ways that cultural meanings and individual experience are fundamentally intertwined (Christopher 2012; Radin 1996; Scheper-Hughes and Wacquant 2002; Verdery and Humphrey 2004).

A second contribution of this thesis relates to our understanding of family consumption. The concept of family is foregrounded in the first two essays, where I show that providing care for dependent family members takes on a different nature when that care is produced by the family member rather than acquired from a commercial provider. Because care-giving is an integral aspect of how family is "done," the outsourcing of care can become problematic. Ultimately, families need to reconceptualize how they will perform family by integrating commercial care into their intra-familial exchanges of care and intimacy. Hochschild (2003, 3), in her extensive writing on family life, notes that this is a more recent phenomenon: "[l]ess and less do we produce care. More and more we consume it. Indeed, increasingly we 'do' care by buying the right service or thing." Families are increasingly relying on market-offered solutions to routine and regular care-giving, and this is prompting a reconceptualization of appropriate care-giving at the level of the individual, the family, and culture (Hochschild 2012). Recent research has

171

suggested that the delegation of care-giving may fall under the scope of acceptable care-giving; for adults balancing the demands and competing ideologies of work and family life, managing and being in charge of dependents' daily care may be coming to be reframed as providing care (Christopher 2012).

The first two essays in this thesis provide empirical support to this notion, by revealing that commercial care can enable individual family members to maintain independence from each other, while continuing to provide requisite and desired levels of care, intimacy, and social relationships. In these essays, I show how commercial care shapes the ways that families perform and enact family, and that this has interesting implications for our understanding of family time. Unstructured, leisurely family time becomes sacralized, and families prioritize the social time spent together at the expense of time spent performing the routine and mundane care-giving tasks for each other (Epp and Price 2012). The third essay is a more extreme expression of this phenomenon; for adult males who seek the physical and emotional pleasure of sexual intimacy without the mundane, everyday interaction and responsibilities of being in a committed romantic relationship, indoor prostitutes offering the 'girlfriend experience' are seen to offer a commercial solution (Milrod and Weitzer 2012). Men can carve out a finite, explicit amount of time to engage in the exchange of romance and intimacy while maintaining their roles and responsibilities in other areas of life. In this way, I reveal that commercial care and intimacy is used to prioritize and compartmentalize time by allowing the consumer to be more efficient in the ways s/he allocates time.

A third contribution of this research relates to the blending of production and consumption in the context of services. The study of marketplaces for care and intimacy

172

provides an interesting window into the way emotional labour is procured and performed. Recent consumer research has examined the blurring of boundaries between how things are exchanged within the family, between the family and the marketplace, and within a wider community, demonstrating that there are different modes of giving (Belk 2010; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012). The provision of care and intimacy can be difficult to characterize when it is exchanged for money (Belk 2010), and this, Zelizer argues, is a product of our cultural uneasiness with mixing money with intrapersonal relationships (Zelizer 2005). In this research, I demonstrate that there are enduring tensions in the consumption of commercial care and intimacy, while also showing that consumers are capable of negotiating these tensions and incorporating the market-offerings into their everyday life. Consumers can learn to effectively balance the aspects of care-giving and intimacy that they produce and consume at various stages in life (Hogg, Curasi, and Maclaran 2004).

TOWARD A THEORY OF OUTSOURCING CARE & INTIMACY

The contributions of the essays comprising this thesis can be overlaid on each other in a way that reveals some broad dimensions of the phenomenon of outsourcing of care and intimacy. A theory to explain how and why care and intimacy are purchased from the marketplace would be useful for consumer researchers interested in studying family consumption, service consumption, and/or commercial care/intimacy providers, and a careful reading of the three essays in this research can illuminate the foundation of a broader theory. In the following discussion, I identify some common themes from the

preceding empirical essays for the purpose of offering a deeper, more cohesive

understanding of the phenomenon.

Commercial Care/Intimacy: Different from Family-Produced Care/Intimacy

Care and intimacy are focal aspects of family life, and the exchange of care and

intimacy between family members characterizes the quality and structure of family

relationships. Market-provided care and intimacy is inherently different than the care and

intimacy that is produced within the family; it is often perceived as an inferior alternative,

requires justification to self and others, and can be problematic for the consumer. Many

consumers struggle (at least initially) to incorporate commercial care/intimacy into

everyday life.

Cultural Norms and the Consumption Experience

Cultural norms play a prominent role in the consumption of commercial

care/intimacy. There are established cultural norms related to ideals (care/intimacy

produced within the family is overwhelmingly seen as ideal), and related to if and when

commercial care is appropriate (e.g., using commercial care when a mother needs to

return to work for financial reasons is appropriate; using commercial romance or

intimacy services is not appropriate). These cultural norms have a very palpable influence

on individuals' consumption experiences, often resulting in guilt for consumers who

choose commercial offerings.

Complicated Choice Process

Selecting a care/intimacy provider from the marketplace is a complicated

undertaking. Multiple constraints are imposed on the consumer who attempts to choose a

commercial provider, and these include time pressure, financial constraints, conflict with

174

individual identity projects and/or family identity projects, cultural norms, the highly

consequential nature of the choice, and/or difficulty in assessing quality. The result is that

the choice of a commercial care/intimacy provider is unlike the choice of a more

conventional consumer product or service, and these complications are especially

pronounced when the recipient of the care is not the individual who chooses the

commercial provider.

The Importance of Time-Bound Sincerity

Consumers and their commercial care/intimacy providers engage in an exchange

that is much more complex than an exchange for a tangible good. Consumers often seek

service providers who can establish and provide authentic, sincere, emotional connections

with the care/intimacy recipient – but only for the duration of the service encounter.

Service providers who seek to enact these sincere, emotional connections with their

clients beyond the boundaries of the service agreement may be perceived (by their

employers or their clients) to be crossing into a territory of inappropriate behavior.

Commercial Care/Intimacy as a Solution

Commercial care/intimacy can play a positive role in individual and family

identity enactments. When commercial offerings are perceived to be supplementing, as

opposed to replacing, the care/intimacy produced within the family, the commercial

offerings can enhance individual and family identity work. In this sense, the marketplace

can strengthen social ties between family members and maintain or improve

relationships[6].

---

[6] Commercial care/intimacy can also have the opposite effect on family social ties. Future research could delineate the features and structure of commercial offerings that strengthen versus destroy these ties.

Tensions Between Individual and Family Identity Enactments

Tensions can arise between individual identity and family identity when commercial care/intimacy is used, because the commercial offerings can facilitate the identity enactments on one level while prompting identity conflict or failure at another level. For example, using commercial elder care can prolong collective family identity at the expense of the individual identity work of an elderly parent.

In sum, the findings of the three essays can be arranged in a way that resembles a preliminary theory of outsourcing care/intimacy. The concepts and themes presented above will need to be refined in further study, and an empirical exploration of the relationships between these concepts and themes is needed. The purpose of this discussion was simply to develop a preliminary theoretical understanding of the phenomenon.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several limitations of this research, and these provide excellent starting points for future research. First, the epistemological orientation does not lend itself to generalizing the findings across a broader population of consumers. That is, I cannot make claims that the experiences of my informants are likely to be common among Canadians, for example. This is one primary limitation of an approach to research that permits a rich understanding of consumer experience.

Second, within the context of each study, there are additional perspectives to be considered, which would broaden and deepen our understanding of care and/or intimacy consumption. One of the most important roles that needs further exploration is that of the

commercial care/intimacy provider, and this thesis would be stronger if I had captured the experiences of childcare, elder care, and GFE providers. This ambitious undertaking would advance our understanding of the phenomena and the theoretical developments in each study. Further, it would allow for an investigation of how service providers' marketing efforts can influence, improve, or complicate consumers' experiences; given the enormous markets for childcare, elder care, and commercial sex in North America, it would be useful to understand how the supply side operates, and how conventional marketing activities are performed and interpreted. For example, do brands help or hinder service providers? What types of marketing communications are more or less likely to attract and retain consumers? Additional inquiry is also needed to explore the concept of family because non-traditional families (e.g., single-parent families, same-sex parent families, blended families) represent an increasingly prominent component of contemporary North American family structure.

A third limitation and avenue for future research relates to differences in consumption experiences across social classes and across cultures. The informants studied in this research had the material resources to purchase good quality care from the marketplace, and their consumption was conceptualized as a choice. Many lower-class families are not in a position to make the same types of choices as the middle-class families I have studied, and it would be critical to understand the role of social class in the consumption of care and intimacy. For example, the tensions between career and motherhood have long been the subject of debate for educated, upper class women, but have generally been overlooked for women of lower socioeconomic classes (see Slaughter 2012). An additional and related avenue for research involves the study of gift-

giving and exchange within non-Western families (Joy 2001).

A fourth limitation and direction for future research relates to development and improvement of public policy. I have demonstrated that the consumption of market-offered childcare, elder care, and sex/romance can be problematic on multiple levels: guilt, ambivalence, and secrecy are common aspects of the consumption experience for consumers; care and intimacy are typically significant monetary outlays for most consumers; and cultural expectations and meanings surrounding the outsourcing of care and intimacy can complicate consumption. Further, commercial childcare, elder care, and sex/romance are important and relevant social issues in North America. I have not, however, explicitly outlined the implications for public policy. There are a multitude of research questions that stem from this thesis, including: How can current policy be improved to promote the wellbeing of individuals choosing childcare or elder care? What can firms do to better enable their employees to balance work and family obligations? In what ways can health care policy be changed to promote more cost effective care for the elderly? In what ways can policy and legislation be changed to improve the safety and wellbeing of commercial sex providers and their customers?

In the follow sub-sections, I outline some of the more prominent limitations of each study.

Essay 1

In the first study, the focus is on mothers' performance of motherhood, and this focus at the expense of fathers' experiences. Fatherhood is experienced differently than motherhood for many reasons, including the cultural conditions surrounding fatherhood

(and motherhood), a lack of physical connection to the baby in utero and as a nursing infant, and the prominent role of masculinity in the performance of fatherhood (Lamb 2010; The VOICE Group 2009). Accordingly, the lack of fathers' perspectives and experiences may be regarded as a limitation to this project, because it precludes an understanding of how the use of commercial childcare impacts the family. Future research could examine the role of fathers, and study the performance of masculinity in fatherhood (Pleck 2010). A natural progression of this body of work would be to also explore the interaction of mothers' and fathers' experiences in dual-parent families, for the purposes of understanding how spousal relationships, parent-child relationships, and family identity are shaped by the outsourcing of childcare.

Essay 2

In the second study, I focused on families where one elderly parent was willing and able to participate in the research, and I did not capture the experience from the perspective of families where the parent's state of health prohibited participation. The challenges of families whose elderly parents are in an advanced state of declined health are likely to be different than those families who can still enjoy a social relationship with their parents (Merrill 1997), and for the purposes of developing theory and public policy it will be important to understand these experiences. Additionally, given that the use of commercial elder care is typically a progression from light, informal care (e.g., weekly, in-home cleaning service) to intensive, residential care (e.g., nursing home), our understanding of elder care consumption would be improved by studying families' use of elder care over time. This would also permit a phase of data collection with the elderly

parents before care is required, and would allow for an understanding of whether and how the elderly can make decisions about their own care prior to using it (High 1993).

Another avenue for future research is to focus explicitly on sibling relationships, including how they change as parental care is chosen and used, how the historic (i.e., childhood) relationships impact the nature of the relationships later in life, and how siblings resolve conflict (Smedley 2009). Additional research could explore the context for families with an only child (i.e., no [surviving] siblings).

Essay 3

The objective of the third study is to develop a rich understanding of the consumer experience in the context of indoor prostitution. In this essay, I identify and explore three dimensions of the experience, and make linkages with theoretical areas of consumer research. This essay is limited, however, by a smaller theoretical development than the other two essays. Future research could make more focused advancements in theory related to the service encounter and value co-creation by examining the role of consumer competencies, service failure, and performance. This inquiry would, of course, need to incorporate the service providers, and would also be strengthened through the use of a participatory netnography (Kozinets 2010); interacting and conversing with consumers would better allow the researcher to refine the interpretation of the data, probe under-examined themes, and develop a better understanding of the nuances of consumption in this context.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In conclusion, this original research offers insight into an under-explored

consumer phenomenon. I have examined three contexts wherein care and intimacy are purchased from the marketplace. Each context is socially relevant, shaped by strong Western cultural norms, and is highly consequential to consumers. In examining the consumption of care and intimacy across multiple contexts, I have offered a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, thereby advancing our understanding of family consumption and identity, cultural influences on consumption, and relevant social issues. Additionally, I have proposed directions for future research that are sure to advance theory in consumer behavior.

REFERENCES

Belk, Russell (2010), "Sharing," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (5), 715-34.

Christopher, Karen (2012), "Extensive Mothering: Employed Mothers' Constructions of the Good Mother," *Gender & Society*, 26 (1), 73-96.

Crockett, David and Melanie Wallendorf (2004), "The Role of Normative Political Ideology in Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (December), 511-28.

DeVault, Marjorie L. (1991), *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Epp, Amber M. and Linda L. Price (2012), "Family Time in Consumer Culture," in *Transformative Consumer Research for Personal and Collective Well-Being*, ed. David Glen Mick, Simone Pettigrew, Cornelia Pechmann and Julie L. Ozanne, New York: Routledge.

Fischer, Eileen, Cele C. Otnes, and Linda Tuncay (2007), "Pursuing Parenthood: Integrating Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives on Persistent Goal Striving," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (December), 425-503.

High, Dallas M. (1993), "Why Are Elderly People Not Using Advance Directives," *Journal of Aging Health*, 5 (4), 497-515.

Hochschild, Arlie (2003), *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hochschild, Arlie (2012), *The Outsourced Self*, New York: Metropolitan Books.

Hogg, Margaret K., Carolyn Folkman Curasi, and Pauline Maclaran (2004), "The (Re-) Configuration of Production and Consumption in Empty Nest Households/Families," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 7 (3), 239-59.

Holt, Douglas B. and Craig J. Thompson (2004), "Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (September), 425-40.

Joy, Annamma (2001), "Gift Giving in Hong Kong and the Continuum of Social Ties," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (September), 239-56.

Kozinets, Robert V. (2008), "Technology/Ideology: How Ideological Fields Influence Consumers' Technology Narratives," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (April), 865-81.

--- (2010), *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Lamb, Michael E. (2010), *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Luedicke, Marius K., Craig J. Thompson, and Markus Giesler (2010), "Consumer Identity Work as Moral Protagonism: How Myth and Ideology Animate a Brand-Mediated Moral Conflict," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (April), 1016-32.

Merrill, Deborah M. (1997), *Caring for Elderly Parents*, Westport, CT: Auburn House.

Milrod, Christine and Ronald Weitzer (2012), "The Intimacy Prism: Emotion Management among the Clients of Escorts," *Men and Masculinities*, 15 (5), 447-67.

Pleck, Joseph H. (2010), "Fatherhood and Masculinity," in *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, ed. Michael E. Lamb, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Radin, Margaret Jane (1996), *Contested Commodities: The Trouble with Trade in Sex, Children, Body Parts, and Other Things*, Boston: Harvard University Press.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Loîc Wacquant (2002), *Commodifying Bodies*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Slaughter, Anne-Marie (2012), "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," in *The Atlantic*, Vol. July/August: accessed 2 July 2012 at: http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/07/why-women-still-can-8217-t-have-it-all/9020/.

Smedley, Keren (2009), "Why Does Caring for Our Elderly Parents Turn Us Back into Squabbling Children?," *Daily Mail, London, U.K.* , August 13, 2009.

The VOICE Group (2009), "The Involved Ostrich: Mothers' Perceptions of Fathers' Participation in the Transition to Parenthood," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 36, ed. Ann L. McGill and Sharon Shavitt, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research, 254-60.

Thompson, Craig J. and Diana L. Haytko (1997), "Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (June), 15-42.

Thompson, Craig J. and Siok Kuan Tambyah (1999), "Trying to Be Cosmopolitan," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26 (December), 214-41.

Verdery, Katherine and Caroline Humphrey (2004), *Property in Question: Value Transformation in the Global Economy*, New York: Berg.

Weinberger, Michelle F. and Melanie Wallendorf (2012), "Intracommunity Gifting at the Intersection of Contemporary Moral and Market Economies," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (June), 000-00.

Zelizer, Vivianna (2005), *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

APPENDIX A

Permission for Chapter 4 to Appear as Published

Dear Ms Huff,

RE: Inclusion of chapter (*Aimee Dinnin Huff (2011), Buying the Girlfriend Experience: An Exploration of the Consumption Experiences of Male Customers of Escorts*) in thesis

We hereby grant you permission to reprint the material above within your thesis, subject to the following conditions:

1. If the chapter includes any third party material that required permissions clearance at the time of publication, you must clear permission once more for this material to be included within your thesis. If permission isn't cleared, you will need to remove this material from the chapter.

2. Suitable acknowledgment to the source must be made and the following licence statement must be included:
'This chapter is © Emerald Group Publishing and permission has been granted for this version to appear here (please insert the web address here). Emerald does not grant permission for this chapter to be further copied/distributed or hosted elsewhere without the express permission from Emerald Group Publishing Limited.'

3. Your thesis may be submitted to your institution in either print or electronic form.

4. This permission is granted for non-exclusive world English rights only. If you require any additional language rights, you will need to clear permission for these separately.. Permission excludes use in an electronic form other than submission. Should you have a specific electronic project in mind please reapply for permission.

5. Should your thesis be published commercially in the future, you will need to reapply for permission.

Should you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to contact me.

I wish you the best of luck with your thesis.

Kind Regards,

Rights Manager

Emerald Group Publishing Limited

The world's leading publisher of management journals and databases

Name	Aimee Lynne Huff (née Dinnin)
Post-secondary Education and Degrees	University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2007-2013; Ph.D. University College Cork (National University of Ireland – Cork) Cork, Ireland 2003-2004; M.B.S. University of Guelph Guelph, Ontario, Canada 2000-2003; B.Comm (Hons)
Honours and Awards	Doctoral Fellowship, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; 2010-2011 Ontario Graduate Scholarship; 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012 Fellow, AMA-Sheth Doctoral Consortium; 2010
Related Work Experience	Lecturer (part time), Marketing; 2011-2013 Richard Ivey School of Business University of Western Ontario

Publications

Huff, Aimee Dinnin and June Cotte, (forthcoming) "Complexities of Consumption: The Case of Childcare," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*.

Huff, Aimee Dinnin, (2011) "Buying the Girlfriend Experience: An Exploration of the Consumption Experiences of Male Customers of Escorts," in *Research in Consumer Behavior, Volume 13*, ed. Russell W. Belk, Albert Muñiz, Hope Jensen Schau and Kent Grayson, Emerald, 111-126.

Dinnin, Aimee, Albert Fonseca, Insa Kuo, Ben Lowry, Lindsay McShane and Erin White (2009), "Knowledge Forum on Socially Conscious Consumerism," *Research Network for Business Sustainability: Knowledge Forum Series*, Richard Ivey School of Business.