

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &
Professional Papers

Graduate School

2015

"I NEED A HAND-UP, NOT A HAND-OUT:" SPOILED IDENTITIES AND IDENTITY MAINTENANCE AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Laura Obernesser

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Obernesser, Laura, "'I NEED A HAND-UP, NOT A HAND-OUT:" SPOILED IDENTITIES AND IDENTITY MAINTENANCE AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS" (2015). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 4451.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/4451>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

“I NEED A HAND-UP, NOT A HAND-OUT:” SPOILED IDENTITIES AND IDENTITY
MAINTENANCE AMONG SINGLE MOTHERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

By

LAURA MARIE OBERNESSER

B.S., State University of New York- College at Oneonta, 2013

Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in Sociology, Inequality and Social Justice

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

May 2015

Approved by:
Dr. Sandy Ross, Dean
Graduate School

Dr. Kathy Kuipers, Chair
Sociology

Dr. Celia Winkler
Sociology

Dr. Christina Yoshimura
Communication Studies

“I Need a Hand-Up, Not a Hand-Out:” Spoiled Identities and Identity Maintenance among Single Mothers Experiencing Homelessness

Chairperson: Dr. Kathy Kuipers

ABSTRACT

This research project explores the processes of impression management and identity maintenance through participant observation, informal interviews, and existing documents for an organization that provides services to mothers who are homeless in the Rocky Mountain West. The observations take place in a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for women in the community and region at three different locations. This project focuses on the complex ways in which mothers who experience severe poverty manage and negotiate their identities when confronted with the often unattainable and contradictory expectations of the cultural ideal of motherhood. These women engage in identity maintenance and emotion work as they apply for assistance from non-profit transitional housing organizations. Those with power in the organizations are seen as threats to the identity of a “good mother” and the women overcompensate for those threats by making downward social comparisons, giving justifications and excuses, scapegoating and redirecting blame. I observe that women express high levels of frustration, sadness, and anger when they confront obstacles to providing shelter for their families. As good mothers, they overcompensate with strong demonstrations of emotion. They also engage in emotion work to control their emotions, particularly when their children are present. Emotion work, remaining calm and reasoned, is a way to overcompensate for threats to their good mother identity, working to eliminate emotional stress for their children. They demonstrate to others and to themselves that they are good mothers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of special people that I would like to recognize for their support, and contributions to my education and to this research project. First, I would like to thank my committee members: Kathy Kuipers PhD, Celia Winkler PhD, and Christina Yoshimura PhD.

I would like to extend special thanks to Kathy Kuipers, who read through my thesis drafts many, many times, and gave me the most helpful feedback and guidance that I could have ever asked for. I would also like to acknowledge her for all of the great work that she has done with the Social Psychology Research Group.

I would like to thank Celia Winkler for all of her teachings in the many Inequality and Social Justice classes that I had the honor of taking with her. She taught me many things about sociological theory, political sociology, and poverty. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Christina Yoshimura for serving on my thesis committee, and for all the valuable feedback that she has contributed to my thesis project.

In addition, I would like to extend a thank you to Dustin Satterfield, who sat with me every Thursday morning to work on our theses together and peer review each other's work. She has been a valuable confidant and friend throughout my time at the University of Montana. Finally, I would also like to thank Elizabeth Seale PhD of the State University of New York-College at Oneonta for all of her mentorship, and her unwavering support throughout my educational journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	4
<i>Cultural Ideal of Motherhood</i>	4
<i>Neoliberal Thought</i>	7
<i>Social Identities</i>	8
<i>Stigma and Spoiled Identities</i>	10
<i>Impression Management and Dramaturgy</i>	16
<i>Identity Hierarchies and Identity Maintenance</i>	20
<i>Homelessness and Motherhood</i>	26
Chapter Three: Research Questions and Methodology.....	30
<i>Research Questions</i>	30
<i>Methodological Approach</i>	30
Chapter Four: Homelessness in the Rocky Mountain West.....	36
<i>Emergency Housing and Vouchers</i>	36
<i>Transitional Housing</i>	36
<i>Local Homeless Shelter</i>	38
<i>Vagrancy Laws, Age Limits and Camping</i>	38
Chapter Five: Findings.....	40
<i>Positive Social Identities</i>	40
<i>Negative Social Identities</i>	45
<i>Stigma Internalization</i>	50

<i>Impression Management and Identity Maintenance</i>	52
<i>Emotional Displays in the Housing Office</i>	63
Chapter Six: Conclusion and Discussion.....	73
References.....	78

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The cultural ideal of motherhood tells us that the “good” mother is the mother who can provide financially for her children, self-sacrifices, is attached to her children, and maintains a stable relationship with a male partner (Hays, 1996). I argue in this paper that women with children who are living in poverty will interact with and internalize the messages contained in the ideal of motherhood as described by (Hays, 1996; Baker, 2009; Collett, 2005) differently from women with children who are not living in extreme poverty. Women with children who are living in poverty are further away from the cultural ideal described in the motherhood literature. Adding to this research, I explore the literature that discusses several of the primary ideologies of motherhood and the ways in which women with children in poverty may internalize and interact with them. I compare this with the different ways in which women with children who are not living in poverty internalize and interact with primary ideologies of motherhood.

Additionally, the symbolic interactionist literature focuses on the nature of stigma, social processes that occur for stigmatized and marginalized populations such as individuals who are homeless and whose identities have been threatened (Goffman, 1959; Collett, 2005). It also focuses on the processes of impression management and identity maintenance for marginalized populations and on the unique experiences of women with children who are experiencing homelessness. For example, Farrington et al. (1999: 176) held that “the homeless have been described as the bilges of our society” and this would construct a low-status and stigmatized group. Most people experiencing homelessness “cannot hide their stigmata” (Farrington et al., 1999) and are very aware of their marginalized status. Farrington et al. (1999: 176) emphasized the notion that marginalized people, particularly homeless people, are constantly reminded of their low-status, and are constantly engaging in identity maintenance in response to identity threat. “The social

identity and self-esteem of the homeless is presumed to be threatened by their condition as a low-status group, but the strategies they use for coping with this threat have largely been neglected in the existing literature.”

This study examines the ways in which single mothers who are homeless construct and manage their identities when they feel that they do not match up to the socially constructed cultural ideals of motherhood. I apply Goffman’s (1963) concepts of impression management, social stigma and spoiled identities and Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory to mothers who are experiencing homelessness and their perceptions that they are not perceived by others as “fit” to be mothers. Just as West and Zimmerman (1987) applied Goffman’s dramaturgical approach to describe gender as a practice, I argue that motherhood is a practice that involves identity maintenance, the use of children as props, and the management of impressions to the outside world in order to maintain the unstigmatized identity of “good” mother. This also requires the negotiation of identities and I argue here that this is especially true for women with children who are in poverty, since they are more subject to stigma and have less power to reject stigmatization for deviating from the cultural ideal of motherhood described by Hays (1996) and Baker (2009).

Collett (2005: 329) discusses this idea that “mothers of all statuses and occupations believe that child-rearing is intensive and should be child-centered.” Collett also noted that financial resources give advantages to those who have access to them by giving women more time to spend with their children. The intensive mothering literature emphasizes being an “attached” parent. An attached parent, according to Hays (1996), is a parent who spends as much time as possible with their children. An attached parenting ideology focuses on being in close proximity to children as a measure of parental success.

In the case of low-income mothers, this “attached” parenting identity is not an easily accessible one, since women in poverty have little to no access to daycare and transportation to get to work. When low-income single mothers do work, they lack adequate daycare. Mothers who are homeless do not have many of these resources, and they face additional challenges that would give them even more difficulties in reaching their ideal identity status. Hochschild (2003) Johnson and Swanson (2006) pointed out in their study that there are contradictions in the cultural ideal of motherhood. Women are both expected to be full-time at-home mothers, and full-time working mothers. It is impossible to be both a full time at-home mother and a full time working mother at the same time. For single mothers experiencing homelessness, there is no way to be an at home mother at all without a home.

“The homeless have been described as the bilges of our society,” according to Farrington et al. (1999: 176) and this constructs a low-status and stigmatized group. Most people experiencing homelessness “cannot hide their stigmata” (Farrington et al., 1999) and are very aware of their marginalized status. Farrington et al. (1999: 176) emphasized the notion that marginalized people, particularly homeless people are constantly reminded of their low-status, and are constantly engaged in identity maintenance in response to identity threat. “The social identity and self-esteem of the homeless is presumed to be threatened by their condition as a low-status group, but the strategies they use for coping with this threat have largely been neglected in the existing literature.”(Farrington et al., 1999: 176). Very limited literature focusing on identity maintenance and motherhood identities addresses the differences between low-income mothers and mothers who have higher-socio-economic statuses, and are closer to the cultural ideal of motherhood (Baker, 2009).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Cultural Ideal of Motherhood

The cultural ideal of motherhood consists of salient, or culturally internalized, messages which tell us what a mother in American society should be in order to be “good” or accepted. The literature which focuses attention on this cultural ideal of motherhood explores three primary tenets. The first is the idea that mothers need to be able to provide financially for their children through employment or have access to resources through other means (marriage, cohabitation, extended family social support).

The second tenet is that mothers need to be self-sacrificing (Hays 1996; Sidel 2002; Collett 2005; Baker 2009). This tenet emphasizes personal responsibility on the part of the mother. The third, and most prominent tenet discussed in the literature is that of the “attached” mother. Scholars refer to this as the “intensive mothering” literature. The focus of this body of work is on the amount of time mothers spend with their children. These studies have found through mostly qualitative data that women, especially low-income women, deem the “good” mother to be the mother who spends as much time as possible with her children. This tenet does not allow for working, as this takes time away from being with one's children (Hays 1996; Collett 2005; Johnson and Swanson, 2006).

Mothers who can provide financially for their children. This tenet of the cultural motherhood ideal focuses on the necessity of mothers being able to provide financially for their children through employment or access to resources through other means such as marriage, cohabitation, and extended family social support. Some authors (Eden 1997; Baker 2009; Hays 1996; Sidel 2006) discuss that this tenet is unattainable for mothers who are homeless and who are unable to provide financially for their children. This pillar of the motherhood ideal does not account for

public assistance or welfare benefits as a legitimately attained source of income. This tenet stresses the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” neoliberal ideal of motherhood.

The realities of being a low-income single mother after welfare reform during the 1990’s were discussed by Eden (1997). This event in history, according to Eden (1997) and Sidel (2006) hit single mothers particularly hard. This emphasis on working hard in order to stay off of welfare was an unattainable goal for many of these women, who were disproportionately responsible for child-rearing (Sidel, 2006). Eden (1997) described the reality of single women with children who are experiencing poverty. According to Eden (1997: 264), “Neither the option of welfare nor work provides single mothers with enough money to pay their bills.” Eden (1997: 264) also argued that single mothers are not in control of their choices regarding child-rearing. They are, according to Eden (1997: 264), “constrained both structural characteristics of cities in which they live and by the quality of the mothers' social capital and access to non-cash resources.” This tenet of motherhood is in direct conflict with that of the “attached” mother. One cannot both be with children full-time and also work.

Mothers who are self-sacrificing. The cultural ideal of motherhood literature focuses attention on the notion that the ideal mother is self-sacrificing. Collett (2005) discusses how the women in her study, which looks at identity maintenance and the construction of motherhood among middle class mothers, used the way their children were dressed as a prop. This prop was used to display the idea that they were selfless mothers whose children always were better dressed than they were. The women in her study discussed their desire to show the world that they were not like those moms who had children in “Walt-Mart with sticky fingers who were dirty” (Collett, 2005: 340).

Collett (2005: 340) identified “good mothers are selfless and sacrifice their own wants and desires for those of their children” to be a basic tenet of child-centered, or “intensive” mothering. This was derived from Hays (1996), which focused much attention on this concept. Collett contended (2005: 340-341), “Mothers, it seems, selflessly invest time and talent, in addition to money, in the appearance of their children and often at the expense of their own appearance.” Collett discussed what she referred to as “name-brand babies.” In order to understand the ways in which children can be used as props in order to be perceived as having been successful in the “self-sacrifice” tenet of ideal mothering. This involved interviewing the mothers about the types of clothing that they wore, and the types of clothing their children wore. She found that most of the mothers in her study wore less name brand clothing than their children (Collett, 2005).

Mothers who are “attached.” The most prominent tenet in the cultural ideal of motherhood literature is that of the “attached mother.” This is often referred to as the “intensive mothering” literature by experts in the field. This literature (Hays, 1996; Johnson and Swanson 2006) emphasizes the idea that a mother spending as much time as possible with her child is the ideal mother. This motherhood attribute is unattainable by women who are low-income because they cannot be both an “attached” mother and work outside the home. This ideology of motherhood emphasizes the idea that the “good” mother stays home full time and does not work in the public sphere at all (Johnson and Swanson, 2006).

“Intensive mothering” is a well-documented description of an ideal motherhood which has been widely studied (Hays 1996). This ideology of motherhood is interchangeably referred to as “child-centered mothering” and “attached mothering” (Bernstein, 2008: 65). She defines this type of mothering as “a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money raising their children” (Bernstein, 2008: 65). Hays (1996) notes in her

work that this ideology is still the most prevalent, even after women have gone into the work force. According to Bernstein (2008: 65), “The life of a modern American mother is a harried one. If she works outside the home, she is hard pressed to meet the dual demands of child rearing and paid job, all the while feeling like a bad mother who is never there for her children.” This tenet of ideal motherhood is in direct conflict with that of the mother who can provide financially for her children because she cannot be spending all of the time in her day with her children and still work a full-time job.

Women with part-time jobs described “good” mothering as both the mother and the child being happy. Full-time working mothers were more likely to feel negatively about their performance as mothers (Johnson and Swanson 2006). Johnson and Swanson conducted interviews with mothers in order to understand the interplay of cultural and personal mothering expectations. Women with children who spent either the most time at home or were part-time at home with their children reported higher happiness than mothers who worked full-time jobs. While this is empirically supported, the definitions of “good” mothering were different for the mothers based on their employment status. Women who stayed home with their children full-time described “good” mothering as “being there.” (2006: 517).

Neoliberal Thought

Neoliberal logic has been a dominant ideology in American society since the late 1900s and favors the limiting of governmental influence on the free market. This ideological theory emphasizes personal responsibility and the ability for Americans to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and implies that hard work will bring about the American dream. It is widely critiqued by feminists and materialist theorists who argue that this neoliberal logic does not address structural inequalities brought about by race, class and gender (Baker, 2009).

This political ideology influences the ways in which low-income mothers experience the receipt of assistance and the stigma faced when they cannot provide financially for their children through “legitimate” means. This logic emphasizing personal responsibility, according to Pat Breton (2014), leaves mothers out and does not address their disproportionate responsibility for child rearing and the double shift labor expected of mothers who do not have the privileges that come with being male. Largely, feminists, such as R.W. Connell, have critiqued the failure of the neoliberal philosophy to advocate for low-income, single mother families. Instead, neoliberal logic actually perpetuates social inequalities and is embedded in masculinity politics. This neoliberal ideology was embedded in the legislations that cut welfare benefits to needy families in the 1990’s, and according to Sidel (2006), hit single mothers particularly hard. Through this ideological lens, single women with children who receive financial assistance fail to provide financially for their children through “legitimate” means and are considered to be the “unworthy” poor (Sidel, 2006).

Social Identities

”Social identity” consists of the parts of a person’s self-image that come from the social categories to which the individual perceives himself as belonging,” according to Tajfel and Turner (1985: 16). Tajfel and Turner point out that their arguments regarding social identity make the following assumptions. “Individuals strive to maintain and enhance their self-esteem,” social identity may be positive or negative due to evaluations coming from the categories and membership in social groups that are “associated with positive or negative value connotations...the evaluation of one’s own group is determined with reference to specific other groups through social comparisons in terms of value-laden attributes and characteristics” (Tajfel and Turner, 1985: 16). Tajfel and Turner also derived theoretical principles from these general as-

assumptions suggesting that people strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity. This positive social identity is based on comparisons that are made between social others that reflect on them favorably, so that when social identity is undesirable, the individual will work to leave their group and join more positively distinct groups or to make their current group more positively distinct (Tajfel and Turner, 1985: 16).

Social identity is defined by Tajfel as “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (1982: 2). Such membership is, according to Farrington et al. (1999), “categorical, and the boundaries between social categories are rendered clear enough to construct qualitatively distinct divisions.” Social identity theory focuses on social comparisons with others. Farrington et al. (1999: 176) points out that the theory focuses on social comparisons expanding on the notion that “all individuals aimed to preserve or achieve a satisfactory self-concept and wished to avoid negative self-esteem.” Group membership also, according to Tajfel (1982), contributed positively or negatively to an individual’s self-concept. Tajfel contributes greatly to the literature on identity and stratification in that he points out the importance of group membership and identification with groups in the formation of self-esteem and a sense of belonging. According to Farrington et al. (1999: 177), “If the in-group could be seen as superior to comparison groups on some valued dimension then group members could ‘bask in reflected glory’, increasing or maintaining their positive self-esteem.” Tajfel’s discussion points to a need for mothers who are homeless to manage their identities in order to avoid association with identities deemed negative. The process of separating oneself from negative identities often involves a process of downward social comparison, or comparing oneself to

presumably less fortunate others (Wills, 1981). This process may decrease the likelihood of being stigmatized and having lowered self-esteem.

Stigma and Spoiled Identities

Goffman's (1959) work on impression management suggests that when we project images, we engage in a process which Goffman (1959: 12) refers to as “definition of a situation.” This is the process that occurs before an individual will manage their impressions. They will decide which characteristics and attributes will be the most desirable in this defined situation and then act accordingly. It is in this process that we come up with our own social meanings for these social situations and the traits for which we will manage our impressions in order to achieve.

Stigma. Goffman (1963: 1) discusses the origins of the word *stigma* and how it came from the Greeks who, according to Goffman, were “strong on visual aids.” The term *stigma* was used to refer to “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier.” These “signs” were cut and burned onto the body in order to publicize that the person with the symbol was a criminal, a traitor, a slave, or an otherwise untouchable individual. According to Goffman, these people were to be avoided by others in the society, and were deemed unworthy of social inclusion. This etymology demonstrates the severity of its use in the description of low-income single mothers. They are being perceived as morally undesirable by society. For this study, this concept is used to explain the way women are depicted when they fail to meet up to the cultural ideal of motherhood, and are instead described as morally unjust for failure to sacrifice of themselves.

The term *stigma* is still widely used with a similar meaning but now is applied more to “the disgrace itself than on the bodily evidence of it” (Goffman, 1963: 2). In this paper, I use the

term *stigma* to refer to the personal attribute that is considered strongly discrediting when held up against cultural standards and expectations. Another important contribution from Goffman (1963: 2) is that the same stigmatizing attribute that discredits one person may actually benefit another. Goffman (1963: 2) held that “An attribute that stigmatizes one type of professor can confirm the usualness of another, and therefore is neither creditable nor discreditable as a thing in itself.” For an impoverished mother raising children, the identity of a woman with children in poverty may be discrediting for that woman, while a man in poverty raising children may be seen in a more favoring light.

Stigma and the cultural ideal of motherhood. There have been a number of studies that focus on motherhood and how it has become a complex issue with more diverse circumstances (Bell, 2004: 45). Bell attributed this more recent focus in scholarship on motherhood circumstances to “the changing structural contexts from within which women mother, multiple identities and meanings of mothering, mothering relationships with children and others, and the experiences and activities of mothering” (Bell, 2004: 45-46). Hays (1996) argued that this ideology of intensive mothering is of particular concern due to its difficulty to achieve for women without adequate financial resources.

Baker (2009) has also explored the ways that ideologies of motherhood have changed over time as the family has become “de-traditionalized.” In particular, Baker examined how traditional ideologies of motherhood still endure, even when social class differences are not accounted for in neoliberal logic. There is a dominant American ideology that implies that people have the freedom to pick themselves up by their bootstraps and become “self-made.” This ideological belief holds that people are no longer confined by traditional gender expectations and that people are free to construct their own family systems and beliefs. Baker discusses these cultural

contradictions that exist for mothers who are living in poverty. On one hand, these women often have unwanted pregnancies and feel that they have no choice in their motherhood. This goes against the neoliberal ideological idea that women are in control of their pregnancies and that having children is a conscious choice.

In Baker's (2009) study, informants expressed feelings of loss of their independence upon becoming mothers (or approaching motherhood). They emphasized the very limited support received from men and the experience of immense social isolation due to lack of childcare. These women from Baker's sample emphasized their self-sacrificing position. This indicates that ideas of sacrificial mothering as a positive identity attribute persist today. This idea that mothers should be self-sacrificing and selfless was also highlighted by Hays (1996) and Colett (2005). As mentioned earlier, in Collett's study, she found that children were used as props by mothers in social situations in order to project a desired self-image. The children were dressed in designer clothing, while the mothers were dressed down in comparison. This choice reflects the social expectation that mothers should be self-sacrificing. The intensive mothering literature, which mostly derives from the work of Hays (1996), emphasizes a need for women with children to sacrifice any activities that do not include spending as much time as possible with one's children. This could be seen as a form of self-sacrifice, as these mothers are socially isolated and vulnerable when they are not making connections that give them social support.

As Baker (2009) points out, the women in her study always discussed the fact that their pregnancies were unwanted, but they also emphasized that in retrospect, they did not regret their decisions to keep the children. This decision to keep the children, they explained, helped them to care about something *more than themselves*. The cultural conflict within motherhood rhetoric discussed by Hays (1996), and Baker relates to this simultaneous existence of feminist rhetoric

that emphasizes personal choice and the more traditional emphasis of self-sacrifice and the care-work of motherhood.

For low-income mothers who are experiencing homelessness, I argue that these social contradictions are particularly problematic. Women with children who are experiencing extreme poverty have limited choices regarding their motherhood decisions due to a lack of access to contraceptives, sexual education, and social guidance. They also have limited access to resources that can help them through the process of having the child, should they decide to, and even fewer resources to raise the child once it is born. Poor mothers find it difficult to work at all if they feel that an appropriate measure of being a capable parent is being an attached mother. In addition, they fail to meet up to the expectation of motherhood that exists within post-feminist rhetoric because they cannot be both a working mother and a full-time at home mother. If they do not have a home, they cannot be an at-home mother at all.

Issues in gender inequality that make the lives of poor women even more difficult are discussed by Baker (2009). Due to the prevalence of this emphasis on self-sacrifice and traditional mothering, women with children who are experiencing poverty experience social messages from the outside world that men with children in similar circumstances do not. Ruth Sidel's (2006) study emphasizes this issue of cultural stigma that single women with children who are experiencing poverty face while men do not. She noted that men who are alone with children are often regarded as "heroes" and treated by outside social others with messages that imply pity, while women in the same circumstances have been described by social others as lazy, the undeserving poor, racially undesirable, outcast, undeserving of inclusion, degenerate, and ruthless (Sidel, 2006).

These negative identities that women with children who are living in poverty are given by those in the larger society, subject them to debilitating and crippling experiences of social stigma. There are significant consequences for failing to meet the cultural ideals of motherhood in everyday interactions. These women living in poverty are often treated by people with power over them in a way that reflects this idea that they are somehow failures as mothers because they do not have the characteristics described in the ideologies of motherhood literature that I discuss above. Some of these “positive identity” attributes include being the attached parent, having financial resources of comparable status to people who are perceived to be adequate social others, having a male partner in a fatherhood role, and having a permanent housing situation. And in some cases, there are contradictions in the cultural motherhood ideal. For example, messages about whether a mother should work full-time or stay home full-time exist simultaneously (Johnson and Swanson, 2006).

Spoiled identities. Spoiled identities are defined by Goffman (1963) as an identity that causes a person to experience stigma. For the purposes of my study, a spoiled identity will be an identity that is perceived as negative or that presents some kind of a barrier to being a “good mom.” In Collett's (2005) study, the children were spoiling the identities of the mothers by making messes and “having sticky fingers (from eating candy) in the Wal-Mart (Collett, 2005: 370).” An emphasis on self-sacrifice and designer clothing was used by the mothers in an attempt to reverse the spoiled identities to avoid further experiences of being stigmatized. Goffman (1968) discusses people of marginalized status managing spoiled identities when they are clearly aware that they are stigmatized:

The stigmatized employ an 'adaptive technique'...whereby persons that are ready to admit possession of a stigma (in many cases because it is known about or immediately present) may nonetheless make a great effort to keep the stigma from looming large. The individual's object is to reduce the tension, that is, to make it

easier for himself and others to withdraw covert attention from the stigma (Goffman, 1968: 125).

Collett (2005) has also examined Goffman's idea of spoiled identities, which involves any time that the desired social identity an actor is trying to project is in some way spoiled, or deemed fraudulent. In Collett's (2005) study, she looked at middle-class mothers whose identities were spoiled by their children, used as props. When children were dressed nicely (more so than their mother) and clean, the mothers, Collett reported, felt as though they were adequately displaying their identity as a "good mother." However, when the children ate candy or in some way got dirty in a grocery store or public place, the mothers' identities were consequently spoiled.

For low-income mothers, this scenario would likely be different. Literature about low-income mothers, such as Baker's (2009) and Hays' (1996) work, implies that single women with children who are living in poverty feel more pressure to show that they are attached mothers who are always present. Much of the literature in the area suggests that low-income mothers use downward comparisons, emphasis on their attachment to their children, and emphasis on their work ethic to validate their motherhood identities. Women who are experiencing homelessness with children might have particular susceptibility to their identities being spoiled because they are subject to an extraordinary amount of stigmatization for being unable to keep their children under a roof.

In my study, I argue that women who are experiencing poverty and homelessness are aware that they are stigmatized or that their identity is spoiled prior to engaging in identity maintenance and impression management processes (Allen et al., 2007). Due to their status as mothers who are homeless and the nature of seeking help in order to alleviate the problem, I ex-

pect that these mothers will be completely aware of their marginalized status. In fact, their identities are likely to be spoiled simply by the act of asking for help.

Impression Management and Dramaturgy

Goffman (1959:65) defines impression management as “accentuating certain facts and concealing others.” According to Goffman (1959: 35), when individuals present themselves to others, their performance “will tend to incorporate and exemplify the official accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole.” Goffman (1959: 36) further discusses how individuals use performances to manage one’s impressions in accordance with social stratification. According to Goffman “One of the richest sources of data on the presentation of idealized performances is the literature on social mobility...There seems to be a major or general system of stratification, and in most stratified societies there is an idealization of the higher strata and some aspiration on the part of those in low places to move to higher ones.” The impression of self is stratified, and while those in the higher strata are idealized, those in the lower strata of society have to work extra hard to manage their impressions in a way that elevates in their social status (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman (1959: 46) also discusses the ways in which performers foster the impression that they “had ideal motives for acquiring the role in which they are performing, that they have ideal qualifications for the role, and that it was not necessary for them to suffer any indignities, insults, and humiliations, or make any tacitly understood deals, in order to acquire the role.” Goffman (1959: 208) additionally points to what he refers to as the “art of impression management.” According to Goffman (1959: 208-209), audiences often define the situations, and the team of “performers” work to “cooperate to present to an audience a given definition of the situation.” This art of impression management is used by low-status individuals in order to evaluate

their social comparison to others. This gives them the information they need to construct and present their performance in order to appear to have a socially desirable identity.

Goffman's dramaturgical approach points to a desire to create an impression that one matches the ideal of which identities are salient. When women feel that their identity as a "good" mother is threatened, they may try to create positive impressions by emphasizing characteristics that are a part of the ideal mother prototype described in the cultural ideals of motherhood and intensive mothering literature. According to Schleenker and Weigold (1992: 134), impression management is often used to "construct more beneficial, less threatening, surroundings." This implies that low-status individuals often use impression management as a protection mechanism against social harm.

Impression management and motherhood. Collett (2005) discusses Manning's (1992) description of impression management is driven by a fear of the presented self not matching from the projected self. This fear is particularly important when one relies on children to provide favorable impressions since they often unintentionally spoil their appearances" (Collett, 2005: 229). As illustration, Collett discusses a conversation between playgroup members in regard to "how to determine the congruency between appearance and reality." In response to an account about "dirty kids in Wal-Mart," Collett mentioned a reaction in which someone responded with "as long as your child is happy, clean, and neat- that is all that warrants being a good mother in my eyes" (Collett, 2005: 229). Collett's findings suggest that women with children use their children's clothes and cleanliness in order to confirm their identities as "good mothers," and to manage their impressions. In contrast, Low-income mothers seem to be far more concerned with their own moral standing, and their own responsibilities as mothers (Baker, 2009; Sidel, 2006). According to Collett, self-presentation gives mothers with children the chance to project

themselves as mothers the way they would like to be seen, “the ideal to which they aspire.” Collett states that impression management is also an avenue in which individuals demonstrate role attachment and role embracement. “Impression management gives mothers an opportunity to demonstrate role embracement-to declare attachment to the role, to demonstrate the qualities and capacity they have to performing it, and to be actively engaged or involved in appropriate role activities.” Collett described something similar to that of a master status, the concept that “when an individual views an identity as central, he or she is likely to engage in behavior that reinforces that identity to the self and others” (Collett, 2005: 330).

Collett has also illustrated the many different ways that mothers may use tactics for self-presentation in order to “claim their identities.” Some examples include telling a stranger that she just had a baby, talking about the bags under her eyes as due to her selfless staying up all night taking care of her infant, or “conforming to the opinions of other mothers in a playgroup” (Collett, 2005: 330; Balswich and Balkwell, 1977; Jones 1964).

For poor women with children, I argue that the need to engage in impression management in order to increase self-esteem is even more extreme and necessary for survival. While poor women may perform this same type of self-presentation, there would likely be a more classed and complicated process. Women who are poor simultaneously defend their identity as “good mothers” and their identity as being the “worthy poor.” Because both of these identities have hierarchies and cultural ideals, many associated at the same time are potentially difficult to unwind. For example, if a poor woman discussed with a social other that she had bags under her eyes because she was caring for an infant all night, she may also be doing so to explain why she was not working, or why she did not have the financial resources to afford to sleep. She may be

talking about her infant in order to identify with a socially acceptable identity, as a “good mother,” and to separate herself from the identity of a “poor woman.”

Doing motherhood: motherhood as a practice. Gender is described by West and Zimmerman (1987) as a practice that is embedded in everyday interaction using the ethnomethodological approach to understanding gender as an everyday accomplishment. West and Zimmerman (1987: 126) contended that “the ‘doing’ of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production.” According to West and Zimmerman (1987: 126), “when we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interaction, and ultimately, institutional arenas.” West and Zimmerman (1987) adopted Goffman’s (1976) terminology, using the “display” of gender identity in order to critically analyze the way that we view gender. West and Zimmerman (1987) have noted that Goffman views displays as “highly conventionalized behaviors structured as two-part exchanges of the statement-reply type, in which the presence of absence of symmetry can establish deference or dominance” (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 129).

West and Zimmerman also described various resources that are used for ‘doing gender.’ This process of ‘doing gender’ involves creating distinct differences between males and females that are not natural, or biological differences. According to West and Zimmerman (1987: 158), gender is something that is routinely practiced in various situations that are meant to be “conventionally expressive to begin with.” They have pointed out that the standards set for various identities pointed by Goffman (1977) are those that reproduce sex differences, and stratification.

I apply these same ideas to women with children who are living in poverty. Just as people can ‘do gender,’ I argue that they also ‘do motherhood,’ and ‘do class.’ In this context, mothers

who are homeless are likely to engage in similar practices described by West and Zimmerman (1987) in order to display their identities as mothers. Also, as women who can financially provide for their children in the presence of social others who make them feel as though they are being looked down upon. For women with children seeking help from a non-profit organization, they likely feel the need to project certain displays that show they are worthy of receiving support and they are not morally responsible for their present ill fortunes. West and Zimmerman (1987) discuss the use of gender representations and displays in order to satisfy the status quo and “render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on a sex category” (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 146). I argue that low-income mothers do something similarly by attempting to identify with a socially desirable social identity based on having children and managing that identity while economically disadvantaged.

Identity Hierarchies and Identity Maintenance

A positive social identity, according to Tajfel and Turner (1985: 16), “is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from relevant out-groups.” This idea of status hierarchies in the context of social identity theory require the membership in a group of people with similar characteristics, and the ability to compare that group to others who are worse off, similar to Will’s (1981) concept of downward social comparison. Without other reference groups and comparison groups, these hierarchies that reproduce marginalization would not be in place.

A negative social identity would be one in which a group that an individual belongs to has an unfavorable position in accordance with socially constructed expectations and idealized identities. These groups would “strive either to leave their existing group and join a more posi-

tively distinct group or make their existing group more positively distinct” (Tajfel and Turner: 1985: 16). Strategies often used in order to make an existing group more positively distinct frequently involve some level of downward social comparison or overcompensation. Low-income mothers have a unique set of negative social identities that they may avoid association with. When they cannot disassociate themselves from these negative identities, they may use other means to justify their identity and justify its legitimacy.

Social re-categorization and positive distinctiveness. Two broad categories of strategic social identity management based on the ideas and concepts of Tajfel and Turner were discussed by Roberts et al. (2008). Roberts et al. (2008: 273) categorized these strategies used for identity maintenance into two broad categories. These are social re-categorization and positive distinctiveness. “Social re-categorization strategies involve attempts to avoid categorization in a devalued social group and attempts to affiliate with an alternate, more highly regarded social group.” This involves attempts to appear similar to a valued social identity and to disassociate oneself from a devalued social identity.

Positive distinctiveness strategies, according to Roberts et al. (2008: 273) involve “active attempts to create a more positive social meaning around a devalued social group by publicly claiming membership in the group, educating others about the positive qualities of the group, or advocating for the group.” This often involves an element of downward social comparison of other groups that are deemed by society to be socially valuable. An example of this might be a poor mother using downward social comparison strategies by describing wealthy people as being “snobs.”

Downward social comparisons. Downward social comparison theory was first developed by Thomas Ashby Wills. Wills (1981: 245) describes the “essence” of the process of downward

social comparison as a way in which people are able to enhance their state of well-being by comparing themselves to less fortunate others. Wills states that this theory addresses “a situation in which frustration or misfortune has occurred that is difficult to remedy through instrumental action” (Wills, 1981: 245). Wills proposes that people in this situation often compare one’s subjective life situation to the life situation of another person who the comparer perceives to be worse off as a form of solution. An example of this would be if a mother compared her performance as a mother that may be the source of distress to the performance of another mother who she perceives to be worse off than she is. Engaging in this process, according to Wills, increases a person’s self-esteem, and makes them feel better emotionally.

Wills (1981) finds that people who either have lower self-esteem or have had their identities threatened are more likely to engage in downward comparison. There is a certain logic that goes into the selection of targets that a person with a threatened identity will choose. “The target principle is included because the literature indicates that people consistently select safe targets-groups or persons whom the dominant culture considers acceptable to derogate... the prevailing tendency is to use lower status groups as targets for derogation” (Wills, 1981: 246). For low-income women with children, this may mean comparing themselves to other mothers with children who they perceive as lower-status and more stigmatized. An example would be a low-income woman who is in poverty with a job targeting a low-income woman who does not currently have employment in order to gain an increased level of self-esteem. Another example would be a white low-income mother who is heterosexual targeting a non-white, low-income mother who identifies as a lesbian.

Justifications and excuses. In making comparisons with others and with ideal types, individuals try to explain their circumstances by giving accounts for themselves. There are the two

general types of accounts identified by Scott and Lyman (1968). Justifications are “accounts in which one accepts the responsibility for the act in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it” (Scott and Lyman, 1968: 47). Excuses, according to Scott and Lyman (1968: 47) are “accounts in which one admits that the act in question is bad, wrong, or inappropriate but denies full responsibility.”

Low-income mothers might use these identity maintenance strategies in order to align themselves with positive motherhood identity traits and to separate themselves from identity traits that have been deemed negative by society. Justifications and excuses are social tools that are used in order to make socially undesirable behavior socially acceptable by describing one’s exceptional circumstances leading them to their socially undesirable behavior.

Identity maintenance and self-validation. Identity maintenance differs from impression management in that it deals with self-validation rather than the image that is projected onto social others. Collett (2005: 342) focused on this process of identity maintenance as coinciding with the process of impression management. According to Collett (2005: 342), “A crucial factor in identity maintenance is the ability of actors to perform in a way that convinces the social other of their identity.” Consequently, this process is still an occurrence in which the actor is trying to convince the social other of their identification with socially desirable characteristics in addition to convincing themselves. In this case, the actor is attempting to make the social other convinced of the actor's belonging to a certain identity. Collett (describes this process as also being important to the development of self-esteem and a positive self-concept. She noted, “In order to enhance their self-esteem, these women are motivated to create and maintain a positive view of self as mother for both themselves and outsiders. Confirming the positive identity reinforces their

self-concept as they imagine the responses and appraisals of others regarding their success as mothers” (Collett, 2005: 342).

In addition to managing impressions on others, women with children who are living in poverty also engage in a process of self-validation. Crocker (2002: 597) noted that “Americans are deeply engaged in the pursuit of self-esteem, attempting to satisfy contingencies or criteria for what makes a person worthwhile.” According to Crocker (2002), a way in which people raise their self-esteem is to engage in a process of self-validation referred to as “self-affirmation.” This process is used, according to Crocker when there has been a threat to an individual's self-worth. “When people experience a threat to their self-worth, focusing on these valued aspects increases tolerance for inconsistency between one's attitudes and behaviors, reduces defensiveness, and increases openness to negative or threatening information, thus facilitating learning (Crocker, 2002: 610). When people experience decreased self-esteem, they experience negative emotions. This may occur for low-income mothers when their motherhood identity has been threatened by not being able to provide for their children’s economic needs. In order to reduce these negative emotions, individuals engage in both identity maintenance and self-validation. Two types of identity maintenance and self-validation measures are downward social comparisons and identification with a non-stigmatized identity.

When an individual feels that their identity has been spoiled, they may emphasize another characteristic or identity to which they belong in order to validate themselves and increase their self-esteem. This process takes away negative emotions (Crocker, 2002: 610). As mentioned before, at the time when an individual experiences a threat to their self-worth, they may focus on other valued aspects of themselves in order to raise self-esteem. An example of this would be a low-income mother emphasizing her work ethic, or her identity as a “good” student.

Maintenance and emotions. When individuals perceive that they are stigmatized or their identity has been spoiled, they will experience a lowered level of self-esteem. People who have low-self-esteem are subject to further stigmatization and will often experience negative emotions such as sorrow, anger, frustration, fear and embarrassment. Crocker (2002) conducted a study to understand the costs of the pursuit of self-esteem, determined that “concern about self-esteem has usually focused on level of self-esteem, and the costs of having low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is correlated with depression, eating disorders, and other indicators of poor mental health.”

It is important to note that the women in my study likely experience many of these negative emotional outcomes related to low self-esteem, spoiled identities, stigmatization, and frustration associated with the poverty itself. Crocker (2002) also discusses that being considered a “good person” is associated with raised self-esteem. I apply this concept to the mothers in my study, as a “good mother” has been associated with being a morally just person. Alternatively, when a mother fails to meet up to the cultural ideal of motherhood expectations, she is likely to be deemed, as in Sidel's (2002) study, morally undesirable. She illustrates the negative consequences experienced by low-income mothers for being both poor and single in American Society. Sidel refers to these women as “unsung heroines.”

Emotion work. Hochschild discusses emotion work in terms of child rearing, and socioeconomic class. According to Hochschild (1979: 570), “Middle and working class parents tend to control their children in different ways,” and this has to do with the patterns that are involved with class inheritance. According to Hochschild, each class has to prepare the children within it for a specific type of career, and parents with certain incomes tend to channel their emotions in different ways during child rearing. For example, a middle class mother may use feelings more

as a way to control the child, and lower class mothers may use control over behaviors rather than feelings. Hochschild explained that lower class children who grow up to work will have been taught that their behaviors can be sanctioned, and that the ways they feel about the consequences will not matter. In contrast, the children of middle class mothers will have been taught to value authenticity and how people truly are as opposed to the consequences of particular behaviors.

Hochschild (1983: 69) discusses the parental emotional obligations. According to Hocschild, “The feeling obligations of parent for child are the clearest imposed emotional obligation in the family.” Hochschild identifies three major ways in which the relation of parent to child differs from other close relationships.

First, the bond usually endures. Especially during the child’s tender years, we feel that a parent should not emotionally ‘divorce’ a child. Second, the bond is tight because in the beginning a child depends upon it for virtually everything. Third, the bond is usually embedded in a wider network of kin and friends. Any bond like the one between parent and child is subject to ambivalence and the rules that contain it (Hochschild, 1983: 69).

She notes that the parent and child relationship is one involving emotion work. In this social dynamic, there is a belief that feelings of love are natural. According to Hochschild parental love is subject to regularly occurring tests. “A parent may habitually lie or rage against a child without explanation and when a child cannot muster the love or sympathy that a father, for example, thinks himself owed, anger may emerge unprotected by the shield of entitlement to it” (Hochschild, 1983: 69).

Homelessness and Motherhood

DeWard and Moe (2010) discuss in their study about women in homeless shelters about how women are more likely to be victimized by family members, often becoming displaced because of domestic violence, and are disproportionately responsible for child-rearing. This isolates single women with children as being a population that is among the most likely to become home-

less. According to DeWard and Moe (2010: 116), “Women are disproportionately represented among those who receive welfare benefits, and are at a greater risk for poverty and homelessness. While the feminization of poverty is a widely studied phenomenon, there is less research focusing on women with children who are experiencing homelessness and the ways in which they become homeless, and how they cope with this issue. They posited, “Of the approximately 38 million Americans living in poverty, 28 million are women” (2010:116). They also noted that the concerns of women who are experiencing poverty and homelessness are more complex and nuanced than the issue of men experiencing homelessness. This is due to the brunt of child-rearing responsibilities being held by women and a lack of resources that can account for these complexities, particularly the issue of children staying at adult homeless shelters.

Women with children in homeless shelters. Davis-Berman (2011) conducted a qualitative study examining the ways in which women with children experience homelessness. According to Davis-Berman, many of the women in her study did not have custody of their children, but continued their past roles of nurturer in the homeless shelter. “Virtually all of the women experienced the loss of their family. Most of the women had children with whom they were in touch.” Barrow and Laborde (2008) conducted a study in which they found that most mothers in homeless shelters are what they referred to as “invisible mothers.” According to Barrow and Laborde, “The stories of the separated women reveal that the distinction between mothers who are homeless with their families and those who are homeless alone is more fluid than prior research suggests” (2008: 168). They suggest that these women talked about the loss of their homes and the traumatic separations from their children as disempowering and disorienting. Averitt’s (2003) study regarding motherhood and homelessness differs from the ones conducted by Davis-Berman and Laborde in that the mothers had custody of their children. The interviewees in Averitt’s

study felt that they were disempowered and had little ability to do anything for their children. “The sense of powerlessness as a parent that accompanies the homeless situation was pervasive” and “The women felt the constant threat of the potential loss of their children” (Averitt, 2003: 94).

In my study, the women are faced with a dilemma regarding their children. In order to stay in the local homeless shelter, they must give up their children. This is due to registered sex offenders being clients at the shelter. The act of giving up their children in order to stay at this shelter violates the tenet of motherhood that emphasizes a need to be in physical proximity to one’s children. At the same time, as Hays (1996) pointed out, there is a cultural contradiction in motherhood expectations in the United States. While the “attached” mothering literature points to a need to be in close physical proximity to one’s children, the tenet of motherhood that exemplifies a need for sacrifice arguably could go either way in this situation. If a mother gave up her children in order to stay at the shelter, it could be argued that she is sacrificing for the child to be “in better hands.” While this is true, it could also be argued that by giving up her children, she is not sacrificing her physical comfort by being sheltered and is a “selfish mother.”

Identities and self-concepts of women who experience homelessness. In a study conducted by Stephen (2000) focusing on the identities of young women in homeless shelters, Stephen’s (2000) sample consists of interviewees who were employed and older mothers. They presented themselves in a ‘more mature’ demeanor than other residents, and according to Stephen (2000: 448), they “reported detachment from the dominant social group within the institution, maintained contact with some members of their family and had longer term ‘housed’ boyfriends.” His study found that the women who stayed at the adult shelters tended to have a “them” and “us” mentality. The female clients often compared themselves to less fortunate others, or reference

groups, in order to construct their own positive identities. In relation to other literature in the area (Sidel, 2006, Eden, 1997) researchers widely find that people who use services from non-profit institutions often perceive that, other people, unlike themselves, are in the situation because they deserve to be. This is reflected in the neoliberal rhetoric in the ideal motherhood literature which focuses on personal and often moral responsibility.

Averitt (2003: 87) identifies “When you’re homeless, you ain’t nobody,” a statement which was emphasized many times in her interviewees for a study about mothers experiencing homelessness. According to Averitt, “The women struggled daily with whether to reveal themselves as homeless when applying for jobs. The women saw stereotyping and discrimination as further limiting their options for housing, jobs, and services” (2003: 87). This further extends the ideas brought up in much of Goffman’s work which posits that low-status individuals are ever aware that they are marginalized and subject to stigma. Moreover, “when people found out they were homeless, they automatically judged them as either prostitutes, poor parents, child abusers, drug or alcohol abusers, irresponsible, lazy, or unreliable” (Averitt, 2003: 88).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

According to the literature, low-status individuals manage their impressions and engage in identity maintenance in order to defend themselves against social stigma they will inevitably encounter in their daily interactions with social others (Goffman, 1959). In conducting a study using ethnographic observations, we have the potential to better understand the ways in which women with children who experience homelessness construct their motherhood identities and engage in both impression management and identity maintenance. This study contributes to the existing literature by adding to information about the potentially harmful cultural messages that exist regarding motherhood, the social processes that occur when these women deviate from the expectations within the cultural ideal of motherhood.

The research questions for this study are: how do women with children who are experiencing homelessness construct their motherhood identities? In what ways do they manage their impressions and engage in identity maintenance? What emotions do they experience when their socially desirable identities are threatened, and they are unable to separate themselves from the negative social identities to which they feel that they belong?

Methodological Approach

I conducted ethnographic observations from November of 2014 until April of 2015 for a total of 72 hours by shadowing the Transitional Housing Case Manager in a the non-profit organization in the Rocky Mountain West described above. This transitional housing program operates through a non-profit organization that is dedicated to advocating for women experiencing homelessness, especially those who are survivors of domestic violence. The location of my observa-

tion has changed over time due to changes within the organization and the movement of other surrounding non-profit organizations in the area.

My population consists of approximately sixty-five cases, with a number of individuals coming to the transitional housing office for follow ups. I attended information sessions about the organization and went to meetings with various parts of the organization in order to familiarize myself with the organization. In addition, I examined the brochures and the website of the non-profit in order to gain an understanding of the content describing the requirements for eligibility and rules for participation in the Transitional Housing program. I conducted informal interviews with three of the Transitional Housing case managers and a staff member who handles the Transitional Housing Program to get a better understanding of the way the staff perceived working with these women, and the difficulties and challenges that they encountered when the Transitional Housing case manager was experiencing burnout.

Ethnographic observations. Ethnography, according to James Spradley (1980), is all about learning from people and understanding the social and cultural meanings and experiences of those we observe. Malinowski described ethnography as a process, “to grasp the native point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world” (Malinowski, 1922: 25). The use of ethnographic observations is appropriate for my study because my goal is to understand the ways in which the women in my study construct their motherhood identities according to the cultural ideal of motherhood, and engage in identity maintenance when their identities have been spoiled by social stigma. Through the use of ethnographic observations, I can understand how they define themselves as women and relate to the cultural ideals of motherhood. In addition, I can learn how these women perceive particular identities to be stigmatizing and what social processes occur in accordance.

According to Spradley (1980: 8), “Ethnography is the study of both explicit and tacit cultural knowledge.” Spradley noted that ethnography has been used widely by most symbolic interactionists because it allows for the observation of specific behaviors that occur in natural environments. This is a type of data that cannot be obtained with interviews alone. Spradley described three premises on which symbolic interactionism theory rests. The first premise was that “human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them.” The second was, “Meanings of such things is derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.” The third premise discussed by Spradley was that “meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters” (1980:8). Since my study is addressing the meanings given by women with children who are experiencing poverty to motherhood and their identities as mothers, these premises of symbolic interactionism are very relevant to my study.

The domain analysis is a methodological approach to coding ethnographic data that was introduced by Spradley (1980). It highlights the importance of looking through fieldnotes for the names of things and then *kinds* of these things there are based on accounts made by people being observed. This process codes for the meanings given to certain aspects of the social world by the people being observed. It is a useful approach because it helps combat personal biases that arise during analysis. One of the major strengths of using ethnographic observations is the ability to learn from the perspectives of the individuals being observed. Spradley’s domain analysis techniques may be used to preserve the native language of the group under study.

The cultural ideal of motherhood serves as a type of “cultural knowledge,” as described by Spradley (1980). Culture, according to Spradley (1980: 9) is “the knowledge that people have learned as members of a group.” He argues that this knowledge cannot be observed directly. Be-

cause of this, it is important to use “speech messages,” or the vocal dialogue made by the observed. These “speech messages” have the potential to connect the dots and inform our “cultural inferences,” or the interpretations that we make when gaining an understanding of cultural life. In order to make cultural inferences, Spradley held that the ethnographer should collect a rich combination of cultural behavior, cultural artifacts, and speech messages. Speech messages are what people say, cultural behaviors are what people do, and cultural artifacts are the tools they use.

Procedure. During the intakes, I was involved with assisting the clients to a minimal extent. I performed small tasks, such as handing out pamphlets, and spoke with them minimally. I played with their children during some of the intakes and give the clients the ability to talk to the Transitional Housing case manager about their situation. The clients were asked upon entry by the first case manager that I shadowed if they felt comfortable with me being there for educational purposes. In the event that an individual did not feel comfortable, I would have left the meeting and returned for the next intake. This never happened during my observations. At no time did I have access to personally identifying information on the clients such as full names, social security numbers, or other information. I did not record anything using an electronic device, and I did not interfere with the normal process aside from minimal interactions with the children, or small talk elicited by the clients themselves.

I took condensed notes which I expanded later to become more detailed accounts of the intakes and the time immediately following the process. As soon as possible after the interview session, I expanded the accounts into descriptive field notes, filling in details and adding recollections not recorded during the in-take interview. During the intake, the clients were asked by the Transitional Housing case manager to explain their situation and were often prompted for

further details about their children, especially when the children were present. Since one of the requirements to receive this service is to have children and to currently be homeless, most all of the clients spent the majority of their time discussing the challenges that they faced in regard to their children and present life circumstances. This shelter defines being currently homeless as being without a place to live. Their definition includes women who have been staying with friends and relatives, or “couch surfing.”

Using a fieldwork notebook and note cards, I coded my field notes by hand for themes and patterns. I kept this field note journal with three main parts: Observations, Personal Reactions and Feelings, and Analysis. The first part contains the expanded accounts of the observations that I made during my participation at the Transitional Housing office, the second part consists of my personal reactions and feelings that I have had about what took place not only during the observations but also during other observations at either center. This includes thoughts that I have relating to my personal experiences, expectations and evaluations of behavior, and my personal biases. My third part contains my initial analysis. I kept the analysis part of my field notes in order to have my thoughts that relate to my analysis organized during my entire research process. During this process, I used pseudonyms, or fake names, to identify and humanize my research subjects. I also recorded any insights that I made regarding this culture of in-take into transitional housing for homeless people. This was especially helpful to me in my coding process. In addition to gathering observational data, I conducted informal interviews with one Transitional Housing case manager about her position and what it is like to work with women with children who are experiencing homelessness. The conversations regarded burnout, challenges in that type of work, and some issues regarding a lack of resources in the area.

Population and demographics. Almost all of the clients, with few exceptions were women experiencing homelessness. Many, but not all, of these clients were victimized by an intimate partner. Most of the clients were of childbearing age and have little to no social support. In order to qualify for the service, the clients must be either parents or legal guardians (in most cases single mothers) who are currently without a place to live. While this is true, some stayed with a friend until they are able to acquire the transitional housing. Many of the clients are unemployed, but it is not uncommon for them to be employed locally in a part-time or low-paying job. Due to childcare restraints and the reality of homelessness, many of these single mothers talked about losing their jobs. A number of the clients have had children taken away from them in the past or have been told that they should give up their children in order to stay at the local homeless shelter that only allows individuals over the age of eighteen.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOMELESSNESS IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST

Emergency Housing and Vouchers

In this region of the Rocky Mountain West, an emergency housing program helps to house women with children who are experiencing homelessness for up to fifty days. This service is available to one and two parent families who are experiencing homelessness. In order to stay here, women will have an evaluation from the intake center to evaluate their level of need. If there is space, they can stay at this shelter for up to fifty days. While the only requirement to use this service is being a family with dependent children, there is a long waiting list and no guarantee for immediate housing. This wait can be anywhere between two weeks and months. During the winter, the waiting time is longer due to demand. Due to these constraints, many of the women who come for this housing service are turned down because there is a lack of resources for families experiencing homelessness. There is a local hotel which houses single parents in need temporarily, immediately if there are vouchers to give out. These vouchers can be found at the local police station, at the intake office, and at the local homeless shelter. Parents with dependent children who are experiencing homelessness can only get up to three of these vouchers, and are often turned away during the winter season when there is no space in this shelter.

Transitional Housing

The website of the non-profit organization that discusses the requirements and rules in order to be eligible for the women's non-profit organization discusses the rules and policies involved with using the Transitional Housing on the website. By using this resource, I learned important information about my sample, their experiences, and the way that the organization runs. The program is an eighteen month program designed for survivors of domestic violence and their children. According to the website's description, there are three two-apartment duplexes, two

three-bedroom apartments, and two one-bedroom apartments available. This reflects the limited resources available for the number of individuals who come in for these spots in transitional housing placements. In order to remain in these housing placements, residents are required to pay thirty percent of their adjusted gross annual income for rent and a four hundred dollar security deposit in order to get the apartment locked down. The non-profit organization is responsible for paying the utility bills, but in order to remain eligible, residents are expected to use energy efficiently. In addition, cable and internet are at the expense of the residents. Residents are not allowed to have pets unless they have a disability and require a service animal. This does not include companion animals, which are quite common in the area. Eligible residents receive fifty dollars per month in “supportive service funds,” which are often used either to pay for basic needs or to save up for permanent housing after exiting the Transitional Housing program.

In order to stay in the Transitional Housing Units, only the adult survivor, or participant and her dependents are allowed to stay in the transitional housing unit, due to funding requirements. There are also rules in place regarding perpetrators and people who are instigators of domestic violence. They are not allowed on the premises at any time in order to protect the collective victims of domestic violence who take the risk to leave their abusers and seek housing and other services with the non-profit organization. This is laid out on the website for the residents to read because some victims may decide to remain in contact with their abusers for child custody purposes. The Transitional Housing case manager is responsible for finding alternative locations for visitations with children in order to uphold this policy. The organization provides a place for this service.

There are several access issues with the transitional housing program and accessibility for single women with children. The first issue is that there is no immediate access. For many of the

women who are trying to get this service, they will need to wait for the housing situation for weeks, or even months. Since there is a limit to the amount of time that women can stay in the emergency shelter for families with dependent children, if they do not get into the transitional housing right away, they will not have a place to stay temporarily. Another issue that I identify is the expense. It is not uncommon for women in this situation to be unemployed and have no income at all. In the event that they have trouble getting work and cannot cohabitate with someone to help them, they will not be able to afford the payments to the organization necessary to use this service.

Local Homeless Shelter

In this region of the Rocky Mountain West, there is also a local homeless shelter that offers a number of services. This organization offers clients who are over the age of eighteen a place to stay when there is room. During the winter, the shelter has a weather policy that allows anyone in need of shelter who meets the age limitations to stay. The organization offers everyone meals during designated times, which includes children. Sack lunches are also available from the food pantry, which is a useful service for women with children.

For single mothers in this city in the Rocky Mountain West, there is a general lack of resources. Most women who are experiencing homelessness who come in for services are helped to the greatest of this organization's ability, but the resources to house these single mothers are very limited. Often, these women are turned away and are not given immediate housing after they have used up their three shelter vouchers.

Vagrancy Laws, Age Limits and Camping

A large issue for women with children in the Rocky Mountain West is the fact that the shelter potentially has sex offenders on the premises, so there is a rule that does not allow chil-

dren under the age of eighteen to stay at the shelter overnight. As a result, women in the area who have children are left with dramatically fewer resources for housing than their male counterparts, who are far less likely to have children in their custody. These women are often prompted by service providers and people who are perceived to have power over them to separate themselves from their children in order to stay at the shelter.

When these women do not give up their children, they are faced with the decision to take their children “camping.” An example of this situation is demonstrated in the following excerpt from my field notes.

When Karen came back in, she introduced us and seemed to be happy to see Barb. This indicated to me that Barb had been seeking services for some time. Barb asked Karen if she could find out where she was on the waiting list. Karen told her that she was not allowed to say. Barb appeared to be saddened by this information but seemed to quickly adjust to the new information. She responded to Karen, “Do you have any camping gear that I can use? I can always go camping somewhere. It will be cold and snow soon, but I can always make it fun.” Karen pointed out that there were camping supplies in the closet at another location. She assured us that she could trick her little one into thinking that they were on vacation.

While she seemed to adjust to the news and try to make the best of it, she still had a few things to say about the difficulties that she would experience and the vagrancy laws.

Barb continued, “I don’t see why cops have to make it impossible for us homeless folk to sleep... we aren’t hurting anyone. I am Native and am just trying to use the land that was taken from us.” Karen informed her that there is a ‘safe’ location that the local homeless shelter and the transitional housing program know of. This location that is secret is used in order to keep these people experiencing homelessness from being arrested when they have to be camping in the freezing cold to begin with.

Throughout my study, which will be discussed in great length, this was a recurring issue that created strain for these women. The main source of this strain seemed to be being prompted into making a decision that could result in possible motherhood identity failure, or further stigmatization stemming from either deciding to keep the children in custody or not.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The women in my study identified a number of positive and negative identities with which they and other mothers identify. In the following section, I discuss the most referenced positive and negative social identity discussed by the women in my observations. The positive identities were the identities that these women described to have positive connotations, be desirable, and be empowering. The negative identities were described by the informants in my study as being unfavorable, stigmatizing, or a barrier in their pursuit of self-esteem.

Positive Social Identities

Former drug addict. A positive identity described by a few of the women was the “former drug addict.” These women told us about a time in which they used to have a drug addiction or were “drug addicts,” but they were able to fight it, and no longer use the substance. This was characterized by the women as being something of which they were proud. A woman I observed exemplifies this in the following excerpt from my field notes.

She said that she had been on medication for six months now, and that she had a serious drug problem before having the baby. She said “She saved me... I had to stop abusing when I got pregnant with her.” She also told Karen that she used to engage in prostitution when she was staying at the [local shelter] in order to get alcohol, which consumption of alcohol wasn’t allowed at the shelter.

Like this client in the previous excerpt, another woman also expressed her ability to get off of drugs as a positive identity attribute in concordance with her motherhood identity.

“I used to abuse alcohol but I stopped after I had my child. Everything changed when I became a mom. I just knew I had to kick the habit.”

The women in my study who described former alcohol abuse and “kicking the habit” as a positive identity felt that their decision to stop abusing drugs was necessary for their children. Their association with the identity of a former drug user was used as an identity that validates their ability to be a “good mom.”

Self-sacrificing mother. The above excerpts from my field notes also describes a self-sacrificing positive identity, which was discussed by many of the mothers. When the woman in the above excerpt said, “I felt like I had a greater purpose more important than myself,” she was describing herself as sacrificing the drug addiction for the betterment of her child in order to be a mother. Another example of a woman with children describing the self-sacrificing mother is illustrated in the following excerpt.

“I am not one of those moms that would ever think about my own safety before my child... And that homeless shelter ought to allow kids...I am not giving up my baby girl! She belongs with me! Those other people who stay there don't deserve hand-outs... none of them work and the mothers there just give up their kids for their own comfort...I would never do that to my baby!”

Another woman with children describes herself as self-sacrificing because she chose to go camping rather than give up her children in order to stay at the local homeless shelter, which does not allow children under the age of eighteen.

Barb started to well with tears and explained that “they” tried to convince her to give her children up and just stay at the local homeless shelter, which does not allow anyone under the age of eighteen because of registered sex offenders and convicted offenders staying at the shelter. “The only option and the only thing that makes sense is that we are all together as a family. I can be uncomfortable as long as my family is together.”

This decision to go camping rather than to give up a child in order to stay at the local homeless shelter was very common serves as a positive motherhood identity. The mothers emphasized this decision as being an example of why they are self-sacrificing, and thus, “good moms.” In the next excerpt, the value of the child over a mother herself was verbalized.

“I don't care about anything but my kids being okay and they aren't and ya'll do nothin' about it.”

This mother, Suzan, described her feelings of frustration in a system in which she felt she had no power over herself or the futures of her children. She expressed her feelings that her needs were not being recognized as important enough to be the focus of attention. Rosa, a young

Hispanic woman who was displaced due to a dispute with her landlord also emphasized her self-sacrificial mothering.

“All I care about is this little one. I am a good mother. I just want a home so that we can be a family again and so that [her daughter] can be stable... I don’t care what happens to me. As long as she doesn’t have to go without like I did when I was her age.”

An interesting trend was that some of the women pointed out that during the holiday time, which was when I did many of my observation hours, how they waited to pay their other bills in order to afford Christmas presents for their children.

“It was definitely worth it for me to just go without paying my rent for a few months so that I could afford to put presents under the tree. I can live with getting in trouble for not paying on time, but I just can’t stand for my kids to be the only ones in school without presents. They still believe in Santa and will find out if the other kids have stuff and they don’t. I can go without as long as I can put a smile on my kids face. I was never had things growing up, and I want my kids to have a different life.”

Another young mother said something very similar. She told us about how she got evicted from local campus-affiliated apartments because she wanted to be able afford birthdays and Christmas for her children.

“My parents don’t know I have no place to live now, but I did it so that we could all celebrate Christmas and my son’s birthday. I tried to get toys from [a local organization that collects toys for low-income children], but they refused to give me toys, so I had to buy toys rather than pay my bills. I got evicted right before holiday break.”

This quote exemplifies this emphasis on being self-sacrificing in order to be a “good mother.” These women find it difficult to live up to the cultural ideal of motherhood that emphasizes both being self-sacrificing and being able to financially provide.

Employed or formerly employed. Many of the women in my study emphasized the importance of being either employed, formerly employed, or seeking employment. All of the women who brought up financial dependency described welfare and forms of financial assistance

as being “illegitimate income.” When many of these women came for assistance and housing, they were sure to emphasize the fact that they work hard and that they have either tried to obtain employment or lost their jobs due to their homelessness. The following excerpt illustrates this emphasis on being a hard-working, or “deserving” poor.

“No one will help me!” A woman named Marybeth exclaimed, “I have been talking to you people all freaking day and I got no place to stay! I have two babies, no place to stay, and I just got a new job that I can’t afford to lose! Ya know, I need a hand up, not a hand out!” I am different from those people who come to your office all the time... I actually work and live in the real world! I need help and am only asking for some damn sympathy.”

Another similar example was another woman saying “I need a hand up, not a hand out.”

She told a very similar story to the one in the above excerpt.

“Now I am homeless and have 16 dollars to my name and am probably going to be starving in the next 48 hours.” I am different from most of the people you probably see here because I don’t pan handle and I am only homeless because I got into a bad situation with a guy. I am actually a really good student and a hard worker. I am not supposed to be homeless.”

This young woman discussed her more socially favorable identity as a student in order to gain social legitimacy, and assistance. She described her situation as unique and described herself as being the “right kind” of mother who is homeless. She emphasized her hard work and self-sufficiency. *Good mother*. Many of the women with children described themselves as a “good” mother by literally stating that they identify with this identity. This was usually used as a way to identify with a socially desirable identity and separate from some other characteristics described by them as negative.

“I may not have a home right now, but I know I am a good mom! I mean- it’s not like I buy myself clothes and jewelry or cars or anything... I spend every penny I ever get from anywhere on my gals. I don’t know why you people don’t do anything to help me get a place to live... It’s not you- just those other people. They keep telling me to go to different places and I don’t know what the heck to do.”

This woman emphasized her self-sacrificial identity as a mother, but also illustrated why she is a good mother. Another example of a mother describes herself as a “good mother” is demonstrated in the following excerpt.

She told us that she felt like “those people” who took her kids away thought that she was a bad mother but she is actually a good mother. “I am a good mom because I care about my kids! I always had family time with them and I need to get them back! I am afraid they won’t let me get my kids back.”

This quote also illustrates how the women seem to clump everyone with authority into the category of “them,” “those people,” and “you people.” She validated her identity as a good mom by saying, “I am a good mom” and then explaining why. Another explicit statement of being a good mother is demonstrated in the following excerpt.

“I am a good mother because I was always there for my husband and my kids. I always loved them. I would never be without them and that’s why I’m a good mother.”

In both of these examples, the women emphasized that they love their children as their validating reason for which they are “good mothers.” Another example of a woman who commented similarly is a young woman named Rosa. She emphasized her self-sacrificial mothering in her description of herself as a “good mother.”

“I am a good mother. I do everything in my power to keep my little one safe and happy. I make sure my little girl has everything she needs. I haven’t even gotten a hair cut in like a year because I spend every cent of money I have on her. I don’t need anything for myself as long as I take care of this little one. I think to be a good mother, you gotta care about your kid more than you care about yourself.”

Rosa had been displaced during a dispute with a landlord who she said “hates her because she is Hispanic.” In all of these examples, the mothers emphasized characteristics that make them “good mothers” and they also explicitly called themselves “good mothers. “Another woman came in for information about transitional housing. She asked Karen where she was on the waiting list and Karen had to turn her away.

“Do you know where I am on the list or can you not tell me?” Karen replied, “Sorry, Tammy...I can’t tell you where you are on the list.” Tammy replied, “Alright...I guess as long as we are a family and we are all together, that’s what matters. I just wish I could find my way around those street people laws and have a way to get warmer. My little one doesn’t know the difference. As far as he is concerned, I am a good mom and doing the best that I can. Tammy had an older child with her who said, “I am sick of this fake camping. At least when we were with daddy I got to play with my toys.”

Tammy seemed to be particularly troubled by these words. In this situation, her older child threatened her positive identity as a “good mom.”

Negative Social Identities

Druggy. One identity described by the women and perceived to be negative was the social identity “druggy.” This was described by a few of the women in the study as an identity that either they or someone they know identifies with.

The next client that came in was an older woman who appeared to be in her late forties or early fifties. She had salt and pepper colored hair. She brought two young boys into the office with her, and told us that she was actually the biological grandmother of the children. She was currently raising the children because her son is a “druggy.” She seemed very comfortable and just sat right down. She said that she needed a permanent housing situation because she is raising the kids on her own. She said that she couldn’t stand the idea of her “druggy” son having the kids.

This identity was also described by the women in the study who emphasized their ability to “kick their addiction” as being a positive identity trait, juxtaposing it to the negative identity they were trying to separate themselves from, “druggy.”

Cognitive disorders. A second identity described by the women in the study that was perceived to be negative was “mentally ill” or “depressed.” Many of the women described some kind of depressive or mentally ill characteristics such as being a “cutter” or having postpartum depression. These characteristics were only coded as being negative social identities if they were described by the women as negative, or in conflict with their ability to be a “good mother” or a

“good” person. These mental barriers stressed the tenet of motherhood described by Hays (1996) of attached parenting being out of reach.

A woman who participated in the study described her issues after being diagnosed with postpartum depression. She described this mental illness as being a perceived barrier to her desired motherhood identity and a negative identity.

A woman that I call Lily was waiting outside the office. Karen sent me out to get her. She seemed to me like she may have been on some kind of medication because her words were slower and she seemed to be a bit groggy. She told us about how she wanted to be a therapist or something in the future. When Karen asked her about her situation and what she could do for her, Lily said that she “doesn’t really feel love for her daughter” so her daughter is staying with her mother. She said that she has been diagnosed with Postpartum Depression and that she doesn’t really feel a real attachment to her daughter. She told us that she feels like a “bad mother” because she can’t “connect” emotionally with her child.

Postpartum depression is a perceived negative identity that is in direct conflict with the mothers described in the “intensive” or “attached” mothering literature. When mothers are unable to be attached due to presumable cognitive dysfunctions, they feel as though they are “bad mothers.”

Bad mother. In the previous excerpt, Lily described the “bad mother” identity. She was not alone. It was quite common for women in the study to either refer to themselves or others as bad mothers. It was far more common, however, for the women in the study to refer to others as “bad mothers” in order to explain why they are “good mothers.” Ricky, one of the two men in my study, did not use the words “bad mother,” but he did describe the characteristics which implied that the mother of his children was “bad.” Ricky is an American Indian who was currently staying at the local homeless shelter.

Ricky told us that he was an aspiring artist, and that he loves to participate in the local art shows for some extra money. He emphasized how little financial resources he had, and how people on the streets wouldn’t help him. He said, “I can’t do this alone and her mom don’t help either! I am the only one paying child sup-

port and my kid needs her mom. I'm not good at this stuff and shouldn't have to be. But a man can be a mom and a dad. That's what I got to do."

While Ricky did not use the term, "bad mother," he did imply that the mother of his daughter was a "bad mother." Much of the time, women in the study described other mothers as being "bad mothers" using those exact words. A woman described herself as a "bad mother" for not having a male partner or financial resources.

"I know that I am a bad mother because I can't afford the basics. I can't afford diapers and food. I don't have any money at all and probably shouldn't have had a kid. I used to have a boyfriend, but he dumped me because I am not a good person. Now I am here. Homeless and alone."

This woman accepted her negative identity as a "bad mother." She internalized her ex-boyfriend's negative view of her and carried it with her as a reminder that she was a "bad mother." A woman considering herself to be a bad mother because she didn't have a male partner is illustrated in the following excerpt.

"I got thrown out of my home when my parents found out that I like girls. I didn't think it was such a big deal, but apparently it was. I got pregnant after I ran away when I was 16. I know they think I am a "bad mother" because my kid doesn't have a dad. Well, they are right.

This exemplifies the marginalized identity of being a lesbian in conflict with the motherhood ideal that has been socially constructed in American society.

No-good father. An identity described by the women in the study that was characterized as negative was that of the "no good father." This identity was used as a type of identity negotiation which separated the women from the blame that was then projected onto the "no good father." This identity contrasts with the "good" mother identity and was used as a tool for downward social comparison.

A woman with a young daughter who looked to be about two or three behind her came into the office. The child was about the height of the woman's knee, had blonde curly hair, and smiled at Karen and me. The woman sat down and said that she needed help finding a place to keep her daughter away from her "no good fa-

ther.” She said that her ex was abusive towards her and feared that he would be abusive towards the child if the opportunity was there.

This mother who is homeless emphasized the father’s role in her current identification as a woman who is homeless. The same woman who talked about the “no good father” of her children also referred to the same man as her “no good ex.” She said that her “no good ex” who was the father of the child was sexually abusive towards her and that she feared the same may happen to her daughter that happened to her if she leaves her with her father. She said that she thinks he will get full custody of the child if she were to fight it because of her past history with the police.

“Too bad I can keep my dog at the homeless shelter and not my kid... I have to have my kid stay with her no good father until I can get her.” She said she needed help finding a place to keep her daughter away from her “no good father.”

This excerpt also exemplifies the issue that at the local homeless shelter, women with children cannot get an immediate housing situation. This, as I have mentioned earlier, has created a moral dilemma for many of these women. The choice to camp rather than stay at the shelter would satisfy the requirements for the “attached” mothering ideology, but would deviate from the “be able to financially provide” tenet of the cultural ideal of motherhood.

Gay parent. Two women in my study identified as lesbians, and both of these women said that their homelessness was a direct result of their identification with the LGBTQ+ community. The following excerpt illustrates a woman’s account of her becoming homeless as a direct result of her sexual orientation.

When asked how she felt in general, she said “I’m dealing with mental health issues and rehab stuff, so I go to different appointment in a week, so it’s been really hard to find a place to live and to get the appointments.” She said that her meds don’t work for her and that she won’t be happy until her parents stop hating her for who she is. She said that her parents being divorced hit her really hard, and that she wasn’t speaking to her mother for a long time, and that she was living with her dad. The young woman described how she feels that her parents want to take her child away from her. She said, “They say it’s because of my mental health problems, but I know it’s because I’m gay. I was never good enough for them.”

This woman views her identity as “gay” to be a negatively perceived identity by others, but one that she accepts as a positive identity of her own.

Lazy mother. Many of the women in the study described some kind of a “lazy mother” identity. This includes either literally using the word “lazy” to describe other mothers, or saying that the other mothers who do not deserve financial “handouts” are not working hard enough (the opposite of the Employed or Working Mother identity, above). There is an example of this in the excerpt:

Those other people who stay at the [homeless shelter] don’t deserve hand-outs...none of them work and complain that they have to do chores. I work hard and have a job.

This woman is describing the other people who stay at the local homeless shelter as being the “unworthy” poor or the “undeserving” poor. She continued,

“God...it must be nice to sit on your butt and not lift a finger. They just read all day and watch TV. None of them work and they seriously think they deserve help? I deserve help because I have worked all my life.”

This is an example of a mother who is homeless describing another social identity, “those people” who are presumably the less deserving or less desirable poor. The following excerpt illustrates a woman stating that she does not want to experience a certain level of embarrassment for failing to meet up to the tenet of ideal motherhood that involves being a hard-working mother.

“I want my girl to grow up with a mom that’s worth something. I don’t want her to go to parent career day and say “mommy is a failure who doesn’t work and had me at sixteen...I guess she’s a professional loser.”

This mother was concerned with the perception that her daughter would have of her as a “good mother” versus an “undeserving poor” person.

Domestic abuse victim. As I discussed earlier, the identity as a “survivor of abuse” was described as an identity that some of the women were proud to identify with; there were also

women who described many of the same events taking place, but characterized it as a negative stigmatizing identity attached to their character. An example of this is in the following excerpt:

My boyfriend punched me right in the stomach. Karen followed up by asking her where the boyfriend was. She looked to the floor and said, "Jail." She appeared to be embarrassed because she said it slowly and quietly as if she didn't want us to hear it. She told us about how she and her boyfriend were planning to have the baby after she got pregnant after a long night of drinking and that she thought he was happy about it... but he cheated on her and when she found out and "called him out on it," he punched her in the stomach and gave her a black eye. Then the police came. Karen's facial expression indicated that she was tempted to ask for more details. She got up from her chair slightly as if she was ready to say something, but backed down. My intuition told me that she was afraid to push her for more details, given the sensitive nature of the topic of conversation. There was a silence for about thirty seconds and then the young girl broke it "At least the baby is okay... and I am going to have a healthy baby. And you're going to give me a place to live, right?"

This woman likely felt as though having an abusive ex who currently resides in jail is a negative identity trait. My assumption comes from her quiet and very mousy answer to the question which asked where the father of the children was. I suspect that she was experiencing embarrassment.

Stigma Internalization

Stigma is defined by Goffman (1963) as any attribute defining an individual that is deemed undesirable or discrediting. Farrington et al. (1999: 176) held that "the homeless have been described as the bilges of our society." Goffman pointed out that marginalized people are very aware of their stigma and my findings are consistent with this idea. Many of the women in my study made statements which confirmed their realization that they are either members of a stigmatized population, or that they were being stigmatized individually for being members of a stigmatized group. The following excerpt from my field notes illustrates perceptions that "those people" who stigmatize her think that they know her.

"I am so sick of those people who think that they know me telling me what to do at the [local homeless shelter]. I am a grown up and can do whatever I want. It's not my fault

that I have to be stuck at the [local homeless shelter] and they treat me like they know me and that I am different from them. It makes me feel like complete crap.”

This quote illustrates the woman’s negative feelings towards those who presumably have more power over her and who she feels threaten her identity or question her worthiness of financial assistance. Like her, another woman also indicated that she feels as though she is a member of a different social strata than Karen. This idea that those in helping professions such as social workers indicates how they are seen as being a source of identity threat and illustrates acknowledgement that she is perceived as a member of a stigmatized population. Single women with children who seek help are deemed a stigmatized, or socially undesirable population who are often blamed for their poverty (Sidel 2006). One example of this is demonstrated in the quote, “Ya’ll took them away thinking you’s better than me!” This woman had her children taken away by another entity aside from the Case Manager at the non-profit organization where I did my observations. While this is true, many of the women shared similar sentiments to that of this woman. There was a general feeling that all social workers and people who work for non-profits hold the power to remove children and that they all want to do just that. The following excerpt is another example of this same trend. A woman who I call Teresa yelled at Karen.

“This is your fault! You people only care about your job and your money and you are the ones who don’t want me to have a place to live, to have my kids, or to be allowed to stay at the [local homeless shelter]! Those jerks gave me an out because I was drinking alcohol. Well guess what...I am a grown up and can do whatever I want and it’s none of your business! You all think I am a piece of crap but you haven’t looked in the mirror lately.”

Teresa was very upset and it seemed, again, like she pointed a lot of the blame to Karen, who was doing a separate task. In this case, she was trying to get her a voucher to stay overnight at the emergency shelter. This excerpt demonstrates that this woman felt as though her she was stigmatized. In this case, alcoholism was a trait which deemed her an unworthy mother and poor person. Another example of a woman being aware that she is stigmatized is exemplified in the

following quote made by a woman who identifies as a lesbian, “They say it’s because of my mental health problems, but I know it’s because I’m gay. I was never good enough for them.”

This woman acknowledges, or at least believes, that her parents are the source of stigma because they see being gay as being a sign that one is not a capable parent.

The following is an example of a young woman with children discussing how her identification with a stigmatized population, teenage mothers, does not make her any less of a mother, but that she is stigmatized and people will perceive her as being a less capable guardian for her place in this stigmatized population.

“My mom and dad think I am not good at being a mom because I am a teenager. When I went to a gynecologist appointment during my pregnancy, I was told that I should just get rid of it or put it up for adoption because I am so young. I think my parents agreed with her because my mom was at the appointment and seemed to side with her the entire time. I said mom... I want to have this baby. Ever since I had the baby, everyone has looked at me weird and I can just tell they don’t think I can do it, but I know I can.”

This young mother needed to get housing from the shelter because she was a victim of domestic violence. She said that it was difficult to deal with the violence, but it was much harder to know that her parents wouldn’t help her should she need it. She went right to the non-profit organizations and did not even bother to consult her parents. This also exemplifies her awareness that she is a member of a stigmatized population, teenage mothers. In her account, she described social others looking down on her as well as people that she knows very well verbalizing their displeasure with her identity as a teenage mother.

Impression Management and Identity Maintenance

Clients engaged in impression management during my time observing them at the intakes. There were seven primary ways that they engaged in identity maintenance. These are justification, excuses, scapegoating, downward social comparisons, and positive distinctiveness.

Justifications. Justification is an account where the person accepts responsibility for their behavior or a situation, but denies any negativity associated with it. An example of a justification is when a woman who was homeless spoke about what things that she has done historically have made her a good mother.

“I can’t keep my marriage...I can’t keep my kids...but I am a good mother because I was always there for my husband and my kids, and I always loved them. When I had my kids, they tried to get me to give them up in order to live at the homeless shelter, but I wouldn’t ever do that... I wouldn’t ever be without them. That’s why I’m a good mother.”

Another example of a mother using justification as a technique is exemplified in the following excerpt.

“Do you know where I am on the list or can you not tell me?” Karen replied, “Sorry, Tammy...I can’t tell you where you are on the list.” Tammy replied, “Alright...I guess as long as we are a family and we are all together, that’s what matters. I just wish I could find my way around those street people laws and have a way to get warmer. My little one doesn’t know the difference. As far as he is concerned, I am a good mom and doing the best that I can. Tammy had an older child with her who said, “I am sick of this fake camping. At least when we were with daddy I got to play with my toys.”

This mother justified her identity as a good mom by emphasizing her effort in order to avoid negative perceptions of her for camping and not having housing for her children.

Excuses. Another identity maintenance process in which my population engaged was that of excuses. This differs from justification in that the individual who is using excuses is explaining, often using similar techniques to ones that are used in justification, in order to justify failure to do something that is perceived to be important for maintaining a positive motherhood identity. They recognize that their behavior is “wrong,” but they give reasons why they are not to blame for their “wrong” decision (Scott and Lyman (1968: 47). The following excerpt is an example of a social excuse technique being used in order to maintain a positive social identity.

When Maureen talked about her kids being taken away, she said “I am a good mom! I love and care about my kids...I just had a bad night.”

Maureen's discussion of her bad night is an example of an excuse being made. She acknowledged that, according to her definition of the situation, made a mistake. In this situation, the mistake was "having a bad night." She continued,

"Yeah... I didn't think straight and got drunk a lot at that time. I just didn't think and the next thing I knew, the cops were there. I really didn't mean to hurt my children. I was just really drunk and tired and they were being bad. I guess the neighbors heard the noises and the yelling. Yeah, I screwed up, but I should get to keep my kids because everyone makes mistakes."

One other mother used an excuse when describing their situation. Most of the women did not admit to "mistakes," and it was far more common for them to engage in justification. The following excerpt contains another example of a woman using an excuse in order to maintain their social identity. This young woman is describing the way that she found out that she was pregnant.

"You know those nights when you just drink a ton of alcohol and wake up and don't know where you are? Well, I got pregnant that night. I was dumb and got really drunk. I didn't really think about any of it. Then I ended up having the baby and living with that loser. He was not a good influence over me, but I think I learned from my mistake. If I didn't get pregnant that night or choose to stay with him, the peer pressure was just so great... I really liked feeling like someone cared about me. I am sure my baby would have been a lot better off. I made the wrong choice, and here we are."

This account exemplifies her acknowledgement that in her mind, she made a mistake. In this example, her excuses were intoxication and peer pressure. She discussed what she perceives, in retrospect, to be bad decisions that she cannot change. She accepts the consequences of her past actions, but uses excuses during this process to deflect the responsibility for that past.

Scapegoating. Another type of identity maintenance, related to the use of excuses, was scapegoating. This process involves an individual deflecting the blame that they perceive is directed at them onto someone else (Fleck, 2011). Oftentimes, in this study, the individuals who received the redirection of the blame tended to be the fathers of the children and the men who

abused the women. Although this is true, there was far more blame on “them,” “they,” “those people” and “you social workers. Many of the mothers felt as though the enemy who caused all of their troubles was the person sitting behind the desk, regardless of what desk they were at. I make the assumption that these women felt frustrated and felt as though there wasn’t anyone who could help them. In the following excerpt, a woman expresses her blame on the father of her children.

She said she needed help finding a place to keep her daughter away from her “no good father. He is the reason that my kid and I have to suffer... he just couldn’t keep his hands to himself.”

Another example of a mother directing blame onto a significant other or the father of the child is illustrated in the next excerpt from my field notes.

A woman with a young daughter who looked to be about two or three behind her came into the office. The child was about the height of the woman’s knee, had blonde curly hair, and smiled at Karen and I. The woman sat down and said that she needed help finding a place to keep her daughter away from her “no good father.” She said that her ex was abusive towards her and feared that he would be abusive towards the child if the opportunity was there.

Both of these examples were presented by the same woman, deflecting the blame onto the father of the children. Another woman whom I described earlier who did not pay bills in order to get Christmas gifts also deflected blame onto her significant other. After her daughter said that she was sick of “fake camping” and wanted to “go home to play with her toys” and be with her dad, the mother told her daughter that her father is a bad man and that she should not want to see him because she will be better off with her mother. “You have a bad father.” There was also one man who was Native American in my population. He deflected responsibility onto the mother of his child. He was a single father.

“I am alone taking care of this kid. It’s my ex-wife’s responsibility because she is supposed to be her mother. He needs a mom. I can’t get no help around here because I am an American Indian. Anytime I ask for help or money people call me a drunk Indian! I don’t even drink. It really upsets me.”

This quote does two interesting things that I have noticed. It exemplifies this process of redirecting of blame in order to avoid negatively stigmatizing identities that social others may attribute to the individual. In addition, it illustrates Sidel's (2006) finding that men feel that they have different responsibilities to children than women do. His statement that "It's my ex-wife's responsibility because she is supposed to be her mother" illustrates the gendered nature of parental stigma.

In addition to deflecting blame and projecting it onto the fathers of the children, there was also a large amount of blaming social workers and people with authoritative positions. For example, many of the women expressed their feelings that social workers are to blame for their misfortunes. In particular, Karen and Julianna, the Case Managers at the non-profit organization, were often targeted by the women as being the ones who were at fault for everything that went wrong. The following quote illustrates this pattern.

"This is your fault! You people only care about your job and your money and you are the ones who don't want me to have a place to live, to have my kids, or to be allowed to stay at the [local homeless shelter]!"

It appears that there was an assumption made on the part of the woman that Karen was responsible for the children being taken away from this woman. While Karen and Julianna were responsible for performing intakes into the transitional housing and emergency housing shelters at the [non-profit organization dedicated to empowering women], but they did not do anything that involves the removal of children. It appears that the nature of the relationship between this group of women and the social workers involves a distrust of those with authority and power over them and, in this case, a distrust of social workers, who presumably have power over them. The following is another example of a woman's account with similar meaning.

"Those social workers keep bothering me and trying to come in and tell me what to do... why can't they just leave me alone? I am a good mother who works hard.

I don't do anything wrong and they think they can stick their noses where they don't belong."

It was common for women in my study to use the words "them" and "they" to describe the people whom they blame for their misfortunes. The following excerpt was used to illustrate excuses, but it also shows the blaming of social workers and "those people."

She told her that she had her kids taken away from her and that she hates social workers and "those people" who think that they know her... she said "I am a good mom! I love and care about my kids...I just had a bad night."

In this example, this woman described the fact that social workers and "those people" do not really have an understanding of her situation and the things that she deals with

Positive distinctiveness. The women in my study engaged in a process of identity maintenance that was consistent with the identity maintenance strategy discussed by Roberts et al. (2008). This process involves "active attempts to create a more positive social meaning around a devalued social group by publicly claiming membership in that group" (Roberts et al., 2008: 274). Some of the mothers in my study engaged in this form of identity maintenance by describing a salient, valued identity as a negative one and their own stigmatized identity as a valuable one. The following excerpt from my field notes exemplifies this social concept.

Karen asked, "Where are your kids?" The young woman responded, "Ya'll took them away thinking you's better than me! You are a bunch of fancy people with jobs and I am a good mom trying to take care of my kids...you jus' take 'em!

By saying "you're a bunch of fancy people," she shifted her identity as a woman experiencing homelessness and as being the legitimate identity within the social interaction. In this context, the identity as "a bunch of fancy people with jobs" is deemed a negative one. It appears that this implies that "fancy people with jobs" are "snobs" or that they have a sense of false "entitlement" or "superiority." Her statement, "You think you's better than me" amplifies this im-

pression, as this already indicates that the woman feels that her identity is threatened by Karen.

Another example of a negative identity reversal is exemplified in the following excerpt.

“This is your fault! You people only care about your job and your money and you are the ones who don’t want me to have a place to live, to have my kids, or to be allowed to stay at the [local homeless shelter]! Those jerks gave me an out because I was drinking alcohol. Well guess what...I am a grown up and can do whatever I want and it’s none of your business! You all think I am a piece of crap but you haven’t looked in the mirror lately.”

In addition to this quote being an example of a woman being aware that she is stigmatized and blaming a social other, it is also an example of using a positive identity reversal. The statement, “You all think I am a piece of crap but you haven’t looked in the mirror lately” exemplifies the act of directing negative attributes to Karen, who is interacting with the woman in this study.

Downward social comparisons. Downward social comparisons, a social psychological form of identity maintenance was introduced by Wills (1979). He discusses the social act in which individuals engage in response to identity threat, stigmatization, and negative emotions that come from being unable to maintain a positive social identity. This process involves making a comparison between oneself and a perceived less fortunate other (Wills, 1979). The following excerpt from my fieldnotes exemplifies this process.

“People who stay at the [local homeless shelter] are among the laziest, most worthless people I have ever seen. They all just live for free and complain about a few chores and bed bugs. If they would just work like I do, they wouldn’t be there. I was different because I actually work and had a bad situation with my ex... but I am different from them.”

In the previous quote, a woman compared herself to the other people who stay at the [homeless shelter] who are perceived by her to be less fortunate others (Goffman, 1963) because they do not work and ask for hand-outs, rather than being willing to put in the work to get a

hand-up rather than a hand-out. Another woman had similar sentiment regarding other people who stay at the local homeless shelter.

“The people who are at the [local homeless shelter] sit on their butts and don’t lift a finger. They are a bunch of cowboys that live their lives traveling from shelter to shelter instead of work. You would think with all of the time that they spend working to not work, they could really make something of themselves. I am a really busy mom, but I never missed a day of work.”

This woman discussed her opinion of the other people who stayed at the local homeless shelter. She compared their perceived laziness to her perceived work ethic which was superior. Again, she described why she was the “deserving” poor and the other people who were staying at the shelter were not. In addition to a downward social comparison being used in relation to poverty and using the shelter, comparisons of this nature were also made about mothers and the “good” vs. “bad” mothers. The following excerpt illustrates a woman using downward social comparison, comparing herself to mothers who give up their kids in order to justify her identity as a “good” mother.

The woman came into the housing office and sat down in the seat across from Karen. She said “I can’t understand those other mothers who are willing to get rid of their kids in order to stay at the [local homeless shelter]... I mean, how can they do that? It’s just awful.”

The following excerpt also exemplifies a downward social comparison involving mothers. This woman came into the office infuriated that she could not get immediate housing.

She said to Karen, “I know it’s not you...it’s those other people. You can’t help it and you probably have a really hard job. Those other mothers you get are the worst. I saw a ton of them at the [local homeless shelter]. They were lazy, bad parents, and couldn’t control their kids who made a huge mess! It was gross! I am just so pissed off because no one can help me and I have an out at the homeless shelter.”

Downward social comparisons were also used in comparison with American Indians, who also are a marginalized population and the single, largest racial minority group in Montana. In particular, this next quote illustrates how American Indians who use services at the local

homeless shelter have been subjects in downward social comparisons as a means for the speaker to raise his or her self-esteem.

She seemed very comfortable with Karen, but voiced her frustration and anger that she has to be uncomfortable and stay at the local homeless shelter with all of those “drunk Indians.” She told us about how she really can’t live like this anymore and needs a place that she can call her own for her baby to live, “and away from those drunk Indians who ask good working people for their money.”

This woman discussed how these “drunk Indians” are the socially less desirable other because they “ask good working people for their money.” This quote was used in order to separate the mother from identification with the socially undesirable identity of “drunk Indian.” And in this comparison, the speaker sees herself as superior in this comparison and more worthy. The following is another example of American Indians being used for downward social comparison.

She was rolling her eyes and popping her gum during the meeting. She said that she was not pleased with the [local homeless shelter] because of all of the “drunk Indians.” “I hate all those drunken Indians who flood our streets with their boozing. I want out! I hate it in [this town]. Good grief! Why don’t they just go away? Nobody wants them here!”

She described the negative identity of being drunk and identifying as an American Indian as being in a less desirable category than being a mother who is homeless. She also described it as an identity that makes the other a part of the “unworthy” poor.

“I am really getting sick of those drunk Indians around this area... they are all over the [local homeless shelter] getting drunk and being allowed back in when they should be booted out for good after getting drunk the first time. They just hit on all the women there...no one wants them there.”

Here, she continued to use downward comparison against American Indians, but here focused more on their financial negligence and their culture of “sucking up the government’s money.” Although she didn’t say so in this quote, she implied that she is better than them and expressed feelings of superiority to them.

Social re-categorization. Roberts et al., (2008) discuss the process of social re-categorization. This process involves “attempts to avoid categorization in a devalued social

group and attempts to affiliate with an alternate, more highly regarded social group. During this process, an individuals will emphasize their membership within a social identity group that is not stigmatized when they are faced with a perceived threat to their identities or an experience of possible stigmatization. The mothers in my study emphasized traits associated with “good” mothers which are described in the cultural ideal of motherhood literature which Collett (2006) discusses.

The following excerpt from my field notes exemplifies a single mother who I refer to as Brenda emphasizing her work ethic, and simultaneously engaging in the process of downward social comparison of people who she deems the “undeserving” poor.

“I bust my butt all day and those people who stay at the [local homeless shelter] complain that they have to do a few chores... I hate when they all pan handle on the streets of [local town]. I once heard someone sitting outside of [local grocery store] tell their husband that they would make more money if they sat at the other side of the store where more students are. They are so lazy! I do everything I can to make sure that my kids are taken care of like any decent parent should.”

Another example of a woman emphasizing her work ethic is exemplified in the following quote, “Those other people who stay there don’t deserve hand-outs... none of them work.” She stated that she worked all her life and that other people seem to get similar treatment, but she is the one who worked hard and deserves these services. In addition to emphasizing association with the “hard working” social identity category, some mothers in my study also emphasized their association with the “intensive” mothering social identity category. The following excerpt exemplifies a woman who I refer to as Amara emphasizing her attachment to her children.

I was always there for my husband and my kids. I always loved them. I would never be without them... My children will always have their mother with them to love them, care about them and support them.”

Additionally, a woman who I refer to as Tara emphasized her “child centered,” or “attached” mothering style in the following quote.

“I want my home to be stable and I want all of my family to be together like they used to be. No family is complete without time being spent on what matters. You know- the children. It’s all about the children. They need to know that their mommy loves them. I will always be there, you know?”

Tara emphasized her “child centered” motherhood style and her “intensive” mothering values. She emphasized her association with this culturally idealized mothering typology, which Hays (1996), Baker (2009), and Johnson and Swanson (2006) discuss.

Children and objects as props. Women in my study used a number of props to manage their impressions. These included children, parenting magazines, children’s drawings, tattoos, and other parenting artifacts. Amanda wore a tattoo as a prop. This may have been used to emphasize her “good” mother identity. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from my field notes.

Amanda came into the housing office wearing a tank top. On her upper back, I could see a tattoo with the face of a baby and two baby feet on her right shoulder. They said the name of her baby, and the size the baby was when it was born. It said 9 lbs and 7 oz. The name of the baby was written underneath the picture in a cursive font. I wondered if this was a form of impression management or just a tattoo that shows the world that she is proud to be a mom.

In addition to Amanda having a tattoo of her baby on display at the Housing Office, a woman who I refer to as Joyce came into the housing office with a magazine for parents titled, *Parenting*.

Joyce sat in the chair with the magazine open and in front of her face while she was waiting for Julianna to finish shuffling papers. The title of the magazine was *Parenting*. She appeared to be engrossed in the material contained within this magazine. She did not have a child with her in the office, but had a diaper bag with her.

This magazine is likely a prop used to display her motherhood identity, even if she just picked up on the way in. There were a number of magazines and pamphlets about parenting and children in the front of the [office at the non-profit organization] and by keeping the magazine with her and making its title apparent, she shows that she is concerned about being a good par-

ent. The diaper bag, however, was not an object available on the way into the meeting and may have been a more conscious choice for a prop.

Barb came into the Housing Office with her two daughters. One was a teenager and the other was a toddler. In her hand were many drawings that were made by her young toddler. She gave them to Karen. Delighted, Karen put them on her wall with other drawings made by children. I asked Karen after the meeting where the drawings came from, and she confirmed my suspicion that Barb brought her children in often and that all of the pictures were made by her young toddler. The picture that now graced her wall had stick figure images of “Mommy, Me, Big Sister, and [Karen].

I suspect that bringing these drawings in to Karen may have been both a gesture of friendship and gratefulness and a prop to demonstrate Barb’s motherhood identity. The picture literally said “Mommy.” This was likely a drawing that Barb was proud of and one that she wanted to put on display to illustrate how proud she is to be “Mommy.”

Emotional Displays at the Housing Office

By seeking services at the Housing Office, the low-income mothers in my study have experienced their identities being spoiled. In my study, a spoiled identity is an identity that is perceived as negative or that presents some kind of a barrier to being a “good mom.” Because requesting housing from an organization which focuses on homeless mothers is an indicator that an individual is in extreme poverty, the women who request these services cannot provide financially for their children. For the mothers in my study, the inability to provide financially for their children is a source of identity threat which leads to an identity to be spoiled. When an individual’s identity has been spoiled, they are subject to stigma and experience negative emotions. The women in my study experienced a variety of emotions in response to their identities being spoiled by being unable to provide financially for their children or having the perception of being perceived as “bad mothers.”

Embarrassment and guilt. Upon coming into the Housing Office, the mothers in my study experience stigmatization (in that they perceive they are stigmatized) and identity threat. The act of seeking financial services is an indicator of failing to provide financially for one's children, according to the cultural ideal of motherhood literature (Collett 2009). This tenet of the cultural ideal of motherhood suggests that "good" mothers do not need to take handouts. According to this tenet, the receipt of welfare and other services is not a legitimate source of income. The process of admitting to a need and requesting financial assistance makes apparent to these women that they aren't adequate mothers because they cannot provide for their families without outside help.

Embarrassment is an example of an emotion that I observed in the women at the Transitional Housing office. The following is an example of a woman I refer to as Rebecca displaying signs of embarrassment.

"I am surprised I get to have him because my boyfriend punched me right in the stomach." Karen followed up by asking her where her boyfriend was. She looked to the floor and said "jail." Rebecca appeared to be embarrassed because she said it slowly and quietly as if she didn't want us to hear it.

I make the assumption that she experienced embarrassment because he said the word "jail" very quietly as if she did not want anyone to hear her. Her looking to the floor when she said "jail" was a telling sign based on my judgment that she was embarrassed. Another example of a woman experiencing embarrassment was arrived at by a woman I refer to as Nadia vocalizing that she had felt embarrassed, but not during the intake.

"I am embarrassed that I can't afford to give my kids the world. My parents don't know I have no place to live now, but I did it so that we could all celebrate Christmas and my son's birthday. I tried to get toys from [a local organization that collects toys for low-income children], but they refused to give me toys, so I had to buy toys rather than pay my bills. I got evicted right before holiday break."

Nadia admitted that she felt embarrassed because she could not afford to give Christmas gifts to her children. She was not the only mother in my study who said that she had neglected to pay bills in order to buy Christmas gifts for her children. I suspect that both of these women were engaging in impression management in addition to internal identity maintenance because they were concerned with what other people thought of their children not having adequate gifts, but they likely experienced a threat to their self-concept and their internal identities as “good” mothers. There seems to be both an element of not wanting the children to feel embarrassed at school, avoiding their own experience of embarrassment because other people might talk negatively about their children not having toys, or perhaps feelings of guilt for not being able to provide desired toys to one’s children. This would then be an emotional response to identity threat because she is unable to provide financially for her children and provide the toys that “good” mothers can provide during the holiday season.

Angry, frustrated and upset. Many of the women, and one man, in my study admitted to feeling angry, frustrated and upset. The following excerpt exemplifies a woman in my study named Katherine expressing her feelings of anger.

“Those Indians just go to the [local homeless shelter] to live there and stay temporarily and then they go get hotel rooms after they can handle their way into money. Their culture is to not work. None of them plan on working and just want to keep sucking up the government’s money. They are all bad news. It really pisses me off when they get extra treatment.”

Katherine admitted to being “pissed off” that American Indians get “extra treatment.” An American Indian man named Ricky expressed feeling “upset.”

“I am alone taking care of this kid. It’s my ex-wife’s responsibility because she is supposed to be her mother. He needs a mom. I can’t get no help around here because I am an American Indian. Anytime I ask for help or money people call me a drunk Indian! I don’t even drink. It really upsets me.

In addition to clients admitting to being angry, upset, and frustrated, many of them showed bodily evidence of experiencing these emotions. The following excerpt from my field notes exemplifies a woman's bodily expressions that led me to the assumption that she was experiencing anger and frustration. I have referred to this woman as Beth.

“Nobody can help me! Nobody wants to help me! Ya’ll don’t care about me...you just care about your jobs and your money.” When Beth asked Karen where she was on the wait list to get into temporary housing, she responded, “Unfortunately, it is against the policy to tell you where you are on the list.” Beth reacted immediately as if she was going to pounce. “So it could be months before I get housing and I won’t even know until it’s time for me to get housing? Her lips were quivering and her eyes were welling with tears. It was my gut reaction that she was experiencing more anger and frustration than sorrow. Karen confirmed her concerns that would not be told where she was on the list. Then Beth responded, “You people need to get better resources- because like this, you can’t help no one! I am screwed and you don’t even care!”

Beth appeared to express her anger by yelling at Karen, and her quivering lips. She also was tearing up, which indicated to me that she was experiencing frustration and anger simultaneously. The same woman calmed down and acknowledged her abruptness when interacting with Karen.

Karen acted sympathetic towards her and tried to calm her down. The woman calmed down slightly, but she still looked livid. Her lips were still quivering and she was still glaring over at Karen. She said to Karen, “I know it’s not you...it’s those other people. You can’t help it and you probably have a really hard job. I am just so pissed off because no one can help me and I have an out at the [local homeless shelter.]”

This same young mother admitted here that she was “just so pissed off.” Her source of anger is the fact that she has a permanent out from the local homeless shelter. She might perceive that her identity as a “good” mother has been threatened because she is unable to provide shelter to her children. At the local homeless shelter, an out means that clients are no longer allowed on the premises, usually related to either having infractions with other clients, drug and alcohol con-

sumption, and for failure to do chores at the designated times. Another example of the expression of anger in my study is exemplified in the following excerpt.

Infuriated, Sophia exclaimed, “You people are never able to help me and all you do is sit there at your desk and smile when I am hungry and cold and without a place to live. It’s called compassion! It’s called compassion!” Sophia stormed out and left the office.”

I made the assumption based on this observation that this single mother was infuriated, and experiencing extreme anger. She slammed things when she walked in, and yelled at Karen for her situation. This was not the only example of a client coming into the Transitional Housing office while presumably infuriated.

Julie came into the office to see Karen at about 11:50 and looked to be very frustrated by the tone of her voice and her facial expression and her accounts of the difficulties that she faces. She exclaimed, “I need a voucher and you people won’t give me one!?! You don’t care about me or my problems- you just care! You don’t understand...I need this voucher so that I can stay somewhere to get a job! This just isn’t fair! She kicked the chair and left the room. Karen seemed very upset after Julie left. She brushed her hair back and her face was beet red.

Julie came into the office on and off all day and seemed to be upset because she was being sent from place to place. She was sent to the church organizations when Karen could not give her additional vouchers. Each person can only have three vouchers. This was the source of a lot of anger and frustration among these women. The following is an example of a mother expressing frustration or discomfort.

Claire told her, and turned her head and told me as well, that she had abdominal pain and that she felt like she might have ate something wrong when she ate at the [local homeless shelter.] She told us that she had some teriyaki chicken, and that she was worried that the chicken may not have actually been cooked enough. She sighed and rolled her eyes when she spoke. She seemed to be frustrated. “I guess I have to go back to eating poor man’s pasta.” Karen asked, “What is poor man’s pasta?” Claire replied, “You know... Jewish spaghetti...Ramen Noodles? The pasta that poor people eat because they got no money.”

Claire expressed her frustration by her sigh, and rolling her eyes. She also seemed frustrated because she said “I guess I have to go back to eating poor man’s pasta.” She seemed to be

very frustrated due to having to eat presumably low-quality food at the local homeless shelter by her standards.

Fear, desperation and sadness. Some of the women in my study also expressed fear, desperation and sadness. An example of a woman in my study expressing fear is a woman I call Serena telling Karen about how she feared that she would never get her children back and that she needed them back. Another example of a woman expressing fear is demonstrated in the following excerpt.

Serena told Karen that she lied to her parents about her situation that was characterized by abuse because she was afraid that her dad would “kill him [her abuser].” Serena told her parents that they were fighting a lot and that she didn’t want to be there anymore. By her mannerisms, she seemed afraid, or uneasy when her parents came up into conversation.

This excerpt described the experience of fear. When she described the reasons why she did not tell her parents of her abuse, she mentioned that she was afraid that her father would “kill” her abuser. She literally stated that she was afraid, and she appeared to be uneasy when her parents came up in the conversation. An example of a woman experiencing desperation, who I have come to refer to as Anna, is illustrated in the following excerpt.

She looked really upset and frantic. She was crying and said she had to get a new house for her kids and her to live tonight. She was calmed down and given a tissue by Karen. “I can’t lie like this anymore...I can’t... I mean what am I supposed to do? What about my babies?”

She appeared desperate to me because she was crying while simultaneously describing not knowing what to do about her babies. Again, her identity of mother was threatened because mothers aren’t supposed to allow their children to go without a home. This served as an indicator that she felt desperate because she also said “I can’t live like this anymore.”

Women in my study expressed many signs of sadness, particularly by crying. While crying is presumed to be a good measure for sadness, it can be difficult to distinguish between dif-

ferent emotions. Also, it is very possible that an individual is crying for multiple reasons. The following excerpt exemplifies a woman in my study expressing sadness and possibly fear and desperation simultaneously.

When Rosa spoke about her life situation, she started to well with tears. She had been kicked out of her apartment complex because she got into an argument with her landlord. She said, “I need to get a place to live where [her daughter] can be stable and we can be a family again. I have living like this and I just want a home!” She continued to cry even more. She expressed, “All I care about is this little one.” The image froze into my mind when I was watching the scene, of the young child wiping away her mother’s tears silently. The two year old seemed to intuitively know that she was better off not saying a word, but only making such a subtly compassionate gesture to her mother, who appeared to be sad.

I made the assumption that Rosa was sad because she was crying and this type of crying, which was rather quiet, prompted her daughter to wipe her tears away. My perception is that her daughter may have been less likely to approach Rosa and wipe her tears if she, who knew her mother quite well, felt that her mother was angry. A possible source of Rosa’s anger could be that she cannot provide financially for her daughter. This would then be an emotional response to perceived identity threat.

Children in the housing office. When the mothers brought the children into the office, they also engaged in emotion work, particularly when their children were present. When children are present, being a “mother” is a more salient identity. During this time, their identity as a “good” mother is more threatened while receiving services than when their children are not present. For this reason, it is possible that emotions displayed at the housing office when children are present is a form of overcompensation in order to convince the housing coordinator that they are “good” mothers who deserve financial assistance. The mothers in my study were significantly more likely to cry loudly, yell, express negative emotions, and voice their displeasure upon hearing that they were unable to receive housing when their children were not present. I speculate that this may have been done in order to keep their children from being afraid. For example,

in the case of Barb, she engaged in identity work when she resisted crying upon hearing the news that she would not get housing for an undesignated amount of time that she knew would be more than two weeks.

Barb seemed to know Karen because Karen knew her name when she came into the housing office. She brought two daughters with her and referred to them as “the girls.” One daughter was a teenager and the other a toddler. When Barb asked when she would get housing, Karen informed her that she could not tell her where she was on the list. Barb’s eyes welled with tears. She pulled her head back and sniffled, as if to hide the fact that she was crying. After she looked back over at Karen, she asked for camping gear. She said that she could always trick the little one into thinking it’s a vacation.

My interpretation is that Barb was engaging in emotion work in order to ensure that her younger child would feel comfortable and to prevent her younger child from experiencing fear. Her bodily manipulation seems to be a form of emotion work that was used in order to sustain a desired parent child relationship. Another example of a mother engaging in emotion work when her children are present is illustrated with Wendy in the following example.

Wendy came into the office ten minutes after her scheduled appointment. She stormed into the office alone. “Why can’t anyone get me into a place to live?!? I have tried everywhere and keep getting referred around! Why can’t I just have a place to stay for a few days? Julianna asked her for her name, looked her up, and discovered that she already had three housing vouchers in the last couple of weeks. Julianna told her that she couldn’t give her anymore vouchers. “What am I supposed to do- freeze?!? She continued to yell at Julianna until her young child crawled into the office. I didn’t understand where the baby came from. It must have been outside next to the door. I could not tell the gender of the baby, as it was dressed in neutral colors. The baby was crying loudly. Wendy picked up the baby, gliding it through the air like an airplane. She was laughing. She then left the office with her baby without the appearance of being angry like she had been prior to the exposure to her baby.

Wendy seemed to engage in emotion work in this situation by changing her emotional expression from anger to laughter as soon as her baby was in her sight. I speculate that mothers with children who are present will resist their hostile emotions in an effort to keep their children

from exposure to the negative emotions. Similar to Wendy's emotion work, Candice also reacted similarly to her child being in proximity to her during an intake.

Candice had curly golden blonde hair that appeared to be frazzled. She wore large glasses that were similar to the ones popular in the late 1980's. She was carrying a little girl with blonde pigtails who was holding a blue's clues coloring book. When she sat down, she let her little girl crawl around the floor. She found the toys in the office right away and began to play. Candice looked at Karen and immediately started to cry. She spoke very little but said that she had been abused by her baby's father and that she couldn't figure out what to do. She kept looking over at her baby and at Karen. She cried continuously until her baby started to cry. She went over to her baby and picked her up. She smiled at her baby, poking her belly while making noises with her mouth. The young child giggled each time she was poked by her mother. Candice seemed to have a different demeanor while she was interacting with her baby than when her baby was on the floor, occupied by the toys.

The mothers who had their children with them were significantly less likely to display negative emotions at all during the intakes compared to mothers who did not bring their children into the meeting. A tall, blonde woman who I refer to as Christina came into Karen's office and did not seem to suppress emotional expressions.

Christina came into Karen's office without an appointment. She was hysterically crying and panting when she got into the office. She told Karen that she needed a place to stay and that she would lose her job if she couldn't stay somewhere immediately. She voiced that she needed to pay for food in order to support her children. She continued to sob and yell at Karen until she was given a voucher to stay at [the emergency shelter] for the night.

Unlike the women who brought their children into the Housing Office, Christina only changed her emotional display after her problem was addressed by the Case Manager. Patricia also expressed her negative emotions freely when she came into Karen's office without her children with her.

Patricia sat down and told Karen and I that she did not have her children with her because they were currently staying with her parents. Patricia was a teenage mother who was recently sexually abused by her ex-boyfriend. She appeared to be very angry because she was tapping her fingers on the shoulders of the chair, popping her gum loudly (seemingly on purpose) and rolling her eyes. When Karen told her that she would be able to stay at the [emergency shelter] without any

issue, she got out of her chair and yelled at her, “I am not staying at another freaking shelter! Last time I stayed at one, before I had my kid, my boyfriend and I were eating gross food and had to get up at the crack of dawn every day! Isn’t there any way I can stay somewhere more like an apartment?!?”

Patricia appeared to be very upset and frustrated. She seemed to have a history of homelessness which predated her recent victimization. I speculate that if she had her child with her in the meeting, she may not have been quite as aggressive. Maybe she would have verbalized her displeasure, but perhaps without yelling. Sherrie was appeared to be very sad or distraught during the intake. She was crying and was comforted by Karen during her intake.

Sherrie was crying when after she was asked about her children. She told Karen that she wanted them back and that she was afraid “they” were going to take her kids again. She said that her little girl was back at home, but that her two sons were gone and that she needed them back. She continued to cry until she was offered tissues by Karen. Sherrie seemed to feel better when Karen was listening to her and treating her with compassion. Sherrie was given a voucher and got to stay at the [emergency shelter] for the night. She seemed to be grateful, but still was crying lightly as she walked out of the office.

Sherrie, like the other mothers in my study who displayed negative emotions, seemed to freely express them in front of Karen, which is a distinct contrast between the mothers in my study who brought their children into the intake meetings. While these mothers appear to express similar emotions of sadness and anger, their expressions are much more vehement than those of the mothers who had their children with them. This suggests that the women who brought their children into the meetings were experiencing additional motherhood identity threat, which required additional emotion work in order to protect the more salient motherhood identity. They worked hard not to show their emotions and to appear as good mothers whose primary concern is the well-being of their children. There’s no doubt that all of these mothers had that concern but mothers who had their children with them needed to behave in a way to protect the mental health of their children, too.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main contribution of this study is its use of ethnographic methods in order to understand a social process that is used in everyday interactions much of the time by most everyone. It expands on the existing literature that focuses on the cultural ideal of motherhood and the ways in which women with children internalize their mother identities. What makes my study unique is that it both studies identity maintenance qualitatively and it focuses on a stigmatized and low-status group, women with children who are homeless. Findings of my study suggest that single mothers who are homeless engage in identity maintenance by making downward social comparisons, making justifications and excuses, scapegoating others and redirecting blame, and changing the negative attributes associated with the negative identity to which they feel that they belong. These mothers engage in emotion work when they seek services from a non-profit transitional housing program. Their identities as good mothers are threatened by seeking financial assistance. This is consistent with the literature which suggests that receiving financial assistance is not considered a “legitimate” source of income. Additionally, the women in my study engaged in emotion work when they brought their children into the housing office. Underscoring their good mother identities, they did not display visible dissatisfaction or anger that would be upsetting for their children when they were present at the housing office.

This study contributes to the existing literature by illustrating personal accounts and perceptions of the women who seek services at a non-profit transitional housing program. This study has the potential to be a valuable source for non-profit organizations that work with needy families, health professionals, social workers and policy implementers because it highlights the ways that social workers are perceived by single mothers who are homeless. Additionally, it could give insight into the importance of the interaction between social worker and client. For

many of these women, the transitional housing coordinator was an outlet for divulging information and sensitive personal accounts. Policy implementers would benefit from the findings of my study because it provides limited insight into the lived experiences of social policies affecting needy families, particularly low-income, single mothers.

My findings are consistent with the existing literature on identity maintenance and motherhood. The mothers in my study did engage in identity maintenance in similar ways to the women in the study conducted by Collett (2005), but the types of identity threat experienced by the women in my study were rather different. First, the women in my study were all homeless and low-income. The types of identity maintenance that the women in my study engaged in were more related to threats to their identities by people with presumably more power over them than in Collett's (2005) study. Additionally, the women in Collett's (2005) study who were middle class seemed to be far more concerned with their children spoiling their identities in front of social others than the women in my study. For the women in my study, the children were not the source of spoiling their identities. They were more concerned that they would be perceived as "bad" mothers for not having necessary financial resources or housing. The mothers in my study also seemed to be more concerned about the way *their children* perceived them than were the women in Collett's (2005) study.

The findings of my study are consistent with my suppositions about what I might find in my study to an extent. I did not anticipate finding that women who brought children into the office would cry less than women without children in the office. I did, however, suspect that I might find that there would be a pronounced distinction between low-income and middle class mothers and the types of identity maintenance they would engage in. I was not surprised to find that, inconsistent with Collett's (2005) findings, the women in my study were not concerned with

the way that their children would spoil their identities. It seemed that their children misbehaving inside the office and crying seemed to be more of a validation tool that they had their children in their presence and that this was a natural thing that all mothers deal with.

I propose that this distinction is due to the differences in values between middle class and low-income parents. Middle class parents tend to teach their children to have an internal locus of control. An internal locus of control tends to be affiliated with values that emphasize personal responsibility and having control over one's life. Low-income parents tend to teach their children to have an external locus of control. An external locus of control is affiliated with having values that imply having no control over one's circumstances. The children of middle class parents crying would be more likely, presumably, to be considered an indicator of bad parenting for middle class parents. Conversely, low-income children may be expected to have less control than their middle class counterparts.

My study has limitations that should be taken into account. My project is neither generalizable nor does it have a representative sample of low-income women or women who are homeless. In addition, I encountered difficulties when collecting my data. First, I was often unable to come into the housing office to shadow intakes because practicum students were shadowing during the same times. Second, there were many structural changes within the organization during the time that I was observing. Two Case Managers quit the position while I was conducting my study. This presented a challenge because there was a period of time where I could not observe while the organization was finding people to cover this position. In addition, the location of the intakes changed twice during my observation period. There were three locations where these intakes took place during my observation period. Due to the nature of this organization being so

busy, I was unable to get into contact with the Director of the organization at times in order to make appointments to shadow Case Mangers.

My sample was collected during a time of crisis in the location where these women came to get services in order to receive help. Each intake which I observed took approximately 30 to 40 minutes, so I only got a snapshot during the time when these women needed immediate help and were often heightened emotionally or they may have been more concerned about their children than usual. In addition, since my project was completely blind to other personal information about the women, I have no access to demographic information aside from what I observed and heard. Some of the women told me their ages, but I only knew what I saw within that snapshot of time. Also, my project is not longitudinal. While I did see some of the same clients come back in, I was mostly seeing new faces during the time that I was collecting my data. It would have been helpful to observe these women repeatedly in order to see how their identities and the management of their identities changed.

A final potential limitation is that I did most of my observations in the cold weather season. I conducted observations during the spring, too, but the bulk of my hours were between November and January. Because of this, the non-profit organization had fewer resources than normal, and there was more demand for housing. This changed the desperation exhibited by low-income mothers and their self-presentation. If I were to conduct this study again, I would have conducted my study longitudinally throughout a year. This would prevent me from collecting the bulk of my data when activity is faster or slower than normal at the Transitional Housing Office. During the winter months, there are presumably more mothers seeking immediate housing than in the summer months.

Implications from the results contribute to the existing literature on the experience of stigma and low self-esteem for women with children who live in extreme poverty. Motherhood ideologies focus on personal responsibility and neoliberal rhetoric and it can be particularly difficult for women who are poor to feel good about themselves. In addition, women who fail to live up to the expectations that are included in the cultural ideal of motherhood may be socially excluded. The work of Goffman (1963), Baker (2009) and Sidel (2006) emphasizes the stratified nature of the experience of stigma for low-income, single mothers. My project expands upon these studies in order to gain ethnographic insight into the process of identity maintenance, absent from the literature for low-income mothers. It would be useful to conduct a study in the future using a qualitative, mixed methods design in order to better understand the messages contained within the cultural ideal of motherhood and the stigmatizing implications of them for women with children who are living in extreme poverty.

REFERENCES

- Allen, Chris, Ryan Powell, Rionach Casey and Sarah Coward. 2007. 'Ordinary, the Same as Anywhere Else': Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity in 'Marginal' Middle-Class Neighborhoods. *Sociology*, 41(2): 239-258.
- Averitt, Sandra. 2003. "Homelessness is not a choice!" The Plight of Homeless Women with Preschool Children Living in Temporary Shelters. *Journal of Family Nursing*. 9(79): 79-100.
- Baker, Joanne. 2009. "Young Mothers in Late Modernity: Sacrifice, Respectability and the Transformative Neo-liberal Subject. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(3), 275-288.
- Barrow, Susan and Nicole Laborde. 2008. Invisible Mothers: Parenting by Homeless Women Separated from their Children. *Gender Issues*. 55, 157-172.
- Breton, Patricia (2014). "Deserving Children and 'Risky Mothers': Situating Public Policy and Maternal/Child Welfare in the Canadian Context." In *Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism*, edited by M. V. Giles. Bradford, Ontario, Canada: Demeter Press.
- Brown, Jonathon D., Rebecca L. Collins and Greg W. Schmidt. 1988. "Self-Esteem and Direct Versus Indirect Forms of Self-Enhancement." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 55:445-53.
- Burke, Peter J. and Donald C. Reitzes. 1981. "The Link between Identity and Role Performance." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 44:83-92.
- Bernstein, Anne C. 1997. "The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood: Book Review." *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 9: 65-85.
- Collett, Jessica. 2005. What Kind of Mother Am I? Impression Management and the Social Construction of Motherhood. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28(3), 327-347.
- Connell, Raewyn. 2010. "Understanding Neoliberalism." *Neoliberalism and Everyday Life*. Eds. Susan Braedley and Meg Luxton. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press. 22-36. Print.
- Crocker, Jennifer. 2002. The Costs of Seeking Self-Esteem. *Journal of Social Issues*, 58(3), 597-615.
- DeWard, Sarah and Angela Moe. 2010. Like a Prison! Homeless Women's Narratives of Surviving a Shelter. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, XXXVII (1), 115-135.
- Doherty, Kevin and Barry Schlenker. 1991. "Self-Consciousness and Strategic Self-Presentation." *Journal of Personality* 59:1-18.
- Douglas, Susan J. and Meredith Michaels. 2004. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women*. New York: Free Press.
- Edin, Katheryn and Laura Lein. 1997. *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Edin, Katheryn and Laura Lein. 1997. "Work, Welfare, and Single Mothers' Economic Survival Strategies. *American Sociological Review*. 62, 2. 253-266.

- Eyer, Diane. 1996. *Motherguilt: How Our Culture Blames Mothers for What's Wrong with Society*. New York: Random House.
- Farrington, Alice and Peter Robinson. 1999. Homelessness and Strategies of Identity Maintenance: A Participant Observation Study. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, (9), 175-194.
- Fleck, James. 2011. *Why We Blame Others: An Examination of Scapegoating*. Ann Arbor, MI. ProQuest.
- Goffman, Erving. 1952. "On Cooling the Mark Out: Some Aspects of Adaptation to Failure." *Psychiatry: Journal of Interpersonal Relations* 15:451-63.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma; Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organizations of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor." Pp. 46-96 in *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hays, Sharon. 1996. *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell 1979. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology*, 85, 551-575
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1983. *Feeling Rules*. In *The Managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2003. *The Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Johnston, Deidre and Debra Swanson. 2006. Constructing the "Good Mother": The Experience of Mothering Ideologies by Work Status. *Sex Roles*, (54), 509-519.
- McKillop, Kevin, Michael Berzonsky, and Barry Schlenker. 1992. "The Impact of Self Presentations on Self-Beliefs: Effects of Social Identity and Self-Presentational Context." *Journal of Personality* 60:789-808.
- Roberts, Laura, Isis Settles and William Jellison. 2008. Predicting the Strategic Identity Management of Gender and Race. *Identity*, 8(4), 269-306.
- Schlenker, Barry and Michael Weigold. 1992. "Interpersonal Processes Involving Impression Regulation and Management." *Annual Review of Psychology* 43:133-68.
- Scott, Marvin, & Lyman, Stanford. 1968. "Accounts." *American Sociological Review*, 33(1): 46-62.
- Sidel, Ruth. 2006. *Stigma*. In *Unsung heroines: Single mothers and the American Dream*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Snow, David A. and Leon Anderson. 1987. "Identity Work among the Homeless: The Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities." *American Journal of Sociology* 92:1336–71.
- Stephen, Dawn 2000. Young Women Construct Themselves: Social Identity, Self-Concept, and Psycho-Social Well-Being in Homeless Facilities. *Journal of Youth Studies*. 3(4): 445-460.
- Spradley, James. 1980. *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Tajfel, Henri and John Turner. 1979. Social Comparison and Group Interest in In-group Favoritism. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 187-204.
- Tardy, Rebecca. 2000. "But I Am a Good Mom': The Social Construction of Motherhood through Health-Care Conversations." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28:433–73.
- West, Candace and Don Zimmerman. 1987. Doing Gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125-151.