THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE LONG-DISTANCE LABOUR COMMUTERS FROM THE CITY OF KELOWNA TO THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

by

Stephanie Nagy

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2014

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The College of Graduate Studies
(Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Okanagan)

January 2018

© Stephanie Nagy, 2018
The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the College of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis/dissertation entitled:

THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE LONG-DISTANCE LABOUR COMMUTERS FROM THE CITY OF KELOWNA TO THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF WOOD BUFFALO

submitted by Stephanie Nagy in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Carlos Teixeira, Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences

Supervisor

Dr. Mary Ann Murphy, School of Social Work: Faculty of Health and Social Development

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Bernard Momer, Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Sara Dorow, University of Alberta

External Examiner
Abstract

Research conducted on female long-distance labour commuters (LDLC) in male-dominated resource extraction industries is limited particularly within a Canadian context. Female LDLCs’ experiences may be distinct from male LDLCs in important ways that can create specific barriers and challenges for female workers. This thesis examines therefore the experiences of female LDLCs acknowledging ideologies of hegemonic masculinities and neoliberalism.

This study is spatially situated in the City of Kelowna as a home community and within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as a work site. Drawing on principals of Poststructural Feminist Geography, this study was conducted as an exploratory case study utilizing a sequential mixed methods approach. Data from this study was analyzed through critical discourse analysis. Recruitment and data collection for this thesis took place between November 2015 and October 2016 through a survey with 9 female LDLCs and 5 in-depth interviews.

The study reveals push/pull forces influencing female LDLCs’ decisions to participate in this type of work. Further, the results indicate that female LDLCs face many implicit vs. explicit barriers working in male-dominated resource extraction industries: constant need to prove abilities and competencies, increased individualism and competition from precarious work, conflicts between motherhood and resource extraction work, and hegemonic stereotypes.

The study additionally demonstrates that participants cope by putting up with challenges through strength and endurance, adopting a work-centric mentality demonstrated through work ethic, proving competencies, and invisibility through avoidance or disengagement.

This study yields policy and practical recommendations aimed at improving female LDLCs’ work experiences: greater family friendly policies, a need for increased diversity in all
sectors of resource extraction, more social support, and effective avenues for support and reporting of discrimination or harassment. Recommendations originating from this study also contribute to broader discussion on gender and labour with acknowledgement of various existing systemic and structural inequalities imbued under the contours of neoliberal ideology and hegemonic masculinities.

This research is not representative of the majority of female LDLC in Canada, but instead focuses on a few in-depth experiences that act as a starting point for understanding and challenging existing barriers based on embedded inequalities.
Preface

This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Stephanie Nagy. The fieldwork reported in chapters Three to Six was covered by Behavioural Research Ethics Board Okanagan Certificate number H15-02155.
# Table of Contents

Abstract......................................................................................................................... iii
Preface......................................................................................................................... v
Table of Contents ........................................................................................................ vi
List of Tables ............................................................................................................... ix
List of Figures.............................................................................................................. x
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................... xi
Dedication..................................................................................................................... xii

## Chapter 1: Overview of the Study ........................................................................... 1
  1.1 Overview .................................................................................................................. 1
  1.2 The City of Kelowna as Study Area ....................................................................... 4
  1.3 Rotational Work and Long Distance Labour Commuting in Canada ................. 6
  1.4 Resource Extractions and Gender ...................................................................... 7
  1.5 Oil Price Activity and its Impacts on Workers ....................................................... 8
  1.6 Purpose of this Study ............................................................................................ 12

## Chapter 2: Literature Review .................................................................................. 14
  2.1 Overview .................................................................................................................. 14
  2.2 The Australian Perspective .................................................................................. 17
  2.3 Under-representation of Women in the Primary Resource Sector ..................... 18
    2.3.1 Gendered Division of Labour ........................................................................ 20
  2.4 A Culture of Masculinity ....................................................................................... 21
    2.4.1 Assimilation into a Dominant Masculine Culture .......................................... 23
    2.4.2 Sexism and Discrimination ......................................................................... 26
  2.5 Glass Ceiling: Motherhood and Engineering ....................................................... 28

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology ............................................ 31
  3.1 Overview .................................................................................................................. 31
  3.2 Epistemological Framework for Conducting Critical Discourse Analysis .......... 32
    3.2.1 Poststructural Feminist Geography and Critical Discourse Analysis .......... 33
    3.2.2 Poststructuralism, Commuting and Gender ................................................. 41
    3.2.3 Positionality and Reflexivity ......................................................................... 42
  3.3 Study Areas ............................................................................................................ 43
  3.4 Research Design & Procedures ........................................................................... 44
  3.5 Target Population .................................................................................................. 45
  3.6 Sampling and Data Collection Procedures .......................................................... 46
3.6.1 Mixed Methods Approach: Challenges and Barriers Encountered .............................................. 48
3.6.2 Data Collection: Questionnaire Design ..................................................................................... 53
3.6.3 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interview Design .............................................................. 54
3.6.4 Data Analysis: Coding and Data Analysis of Qualitative Interviews ....................................... 56
3.7 Limitations and Biases ................................................................................................................. 57
3.8 Strengths ...................................................................................................................................... 58
3.9 Ethical Considerations .................................................................................................................. 58
3.10 Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 60

Chapter 4: Experiences of Female LDLCs Working in a Male-dominated Resource Extraction Industry ................................................................................................................................. 61
4.1 Overview ........................................................................................................................................ 61
4.2 Age, Gender, and Marital Status ................................................................................................... 61
4.2.1 Education, Occupation and Income .......................................................................................... 61
4.3 Entry into Resource Extraction and Work History ...................................................................... 63
4.3.1 Pull Forces: Kelowna and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo ................................. 64
4.3.2 Push Forces: Kelowna and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo ............................... 68
4.4 Gender and Place: The Case of Alberta’s Resource Extraction Industry .................................... 71
4.4.1 Gender and the Resource Extraction Work Culture ............................................................... 73
4.4.2 Barriers in Resource Extraction: Discourse on Gender and Success .................................... 75
4.4.3 Mother, Wife, and Career Women ........................................................................................ 79
4.5 Summary ........................................................................................................................................ 82

Chapter 5: Material and Discursive Practices: Gender, Neoliberalism and Hegemonic Masculinities .................................................................................................................................................. 83
5.1 Overview ......................................................................................................................................... 83
5.2 Introduction of Key Concepts for Analysis of Qualitative Interviews ........................................ 84
5.2.1 Hegemonic Masculinities and Alberta’s Resource Extraction Industry ............................... 84
5.2.2 Discourses of Neoliberalism on Gender and Resource Extraction ........................................ 85
5.2.3 Linking Hegemonic Masculinities and Neoliberalism ............................................................. 88
5.3 Evaluations on Gender in Resource Extraction through Neoliberal Discourses ..................... 89
5.3.1 Neoliberal Discourses of Individualism on Success, Gender and Work in a Male-Dominated World ........................................................................................................................................ 90
5.3.2 Gender and Competency: Constant Need to Prove Yourself ............................................... 99
5.3.3 Precarious Employment and Competition in Resource Extraction ....................................... 104
5.3.4 Neoliberal Individualism and Masculine Hegemony Through Lack of Family-Friendly Policies

5.4 Evaluations on Appearance and Personality of Female Workers in Resource Extraction

5.4.1 “The Right Personality” Fitting In and Gendered Experiences in Resource Extraction

5.5 Coping Strategies Used by Participants

5.5.1 Putting Up with It: Strength and Endurance

5.5.2 Work Exclusivity Through Working Hard and Proving Abilities

5.5.3 Invisibility through Avoidance and/or Disengagement

5.6 Summary

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Overview

6.2 Research Findings

6.3 Recommendations

6.4 Areas for Future Research

Bibliography

Appendices

Appendix A: Map of Central Okanagan Regional District

Appendix B: Map of Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Alberta

Appendix C: 5 Electoral Districts in The Okanagan

Appendix D: List of Oil Camps

Appendix E: Questionnaire Survey

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Appendix G: Initial Contact Letter Organizations

Appendix H: Questionnaire Survey Consent Form

Appendix I: Interview Consent Form

Appendix J: Participant Initial Contact Letter and Screening Questions

Appendix K: Tear Away Recruitment Poster

Appendix L: Recruitment Poster
List of Tables

Table 4.1 Female LDLCs’ Education Levels.................................................................62
Table 4.2 Year Started in Resource Extraction and Long-distance Labour Commuting.....63
Table 4.3 Income Distribution of Female Workers..........................................................63
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Oil Industry Employment Rate Drop Between 2014 and 2015..........................11
Figure 2.1 Female Participation in Mining, Oil Sands Mining, and Other Industry Sectors....19
Figure 2.2 Female Participation in Selected Occupations — Oil Sands Mining..................20
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to offer my upmost and deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Carlos Teixeira for your guidance and support throughout my research process as well as my undergraduate. I am most especially grateful for your continuous encouragement and passion. You have inspired me both in and out of academia. I can literally say that taking my very first Geography class with you has changed my life. It has been a true honor to work under your guidance. To my committee members, Professors Mary Ann Murphy, and Bernard Momer, who have guided me at every stage of my research, I sincerely appreciate all your support and expertise.

I extend my gratitude to another faculty member, Professor Jon Corbett. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of such an important and seminal research project, working with such an incredible research team. You have truly taught me so much, and I tremendously appreciate it.

I would like to acknowledge a few outstanding people, who have offered unending support and friendship throughout my research: Shelley Cook, Sara Vieira, Ailsa Beischer, and Jasmeet Bahia. Thank you for all the encouragement, laughs, and for sharing your wisdom.

To my family, Papa, Mami, Ági, & Gergő, I am forever indebted to you! Your unconditional love and support throughout my research has been my backbone. For always being a safe place to go without judgement, and for truly helping me to navigate all the winding roads and overwhelming times. Nagyon szépen köszönök nektek mindent amit értet tettetek — Isten áldjon benneteket.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the incredible women who participated in my research. Thank you for trusting me with your stories, and for the strides you make as women thriving in what is undoubtedly a man’s world.
Dedication

To all who spend their lives championing for the rights and freedoms, dignities and equality of all people.
Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

1.1 Overview

The focus of this thesis grew out of a growing recognition for the need of greater investigations into the gendered experiences of female long-distance labour commuters (LDLC) working within resource extraction industries. Primarily, this recognition originated on the part of contemporary scholars’ move away from more positivist analyses of investigation that treat gender as dichotomous (Costa, Silva, & Hui, 2006), into critical investigations that acknowledge pluralities of gender (O’Shaughnessy, 2011; O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011). Women’s experiences in resource extraction have been narrowly studied, particularly in the case of long-distance labour commuting, despite the growing number of women working in resource extraction. Within much research on long-distance labour commuting and resource extraction work, women have predominantly been confined into research analyzing their experiences as wives (partners) and mothers remaining in the home community, while their husbands (partners) work away. Additionally, these studies are most often situated spatially within the Maritime Provinces within the Canadian context, specifically the Province of Newfoundland (Whalen & Schmidt, 2016; Sandow, 2014; Whalen, 2013; Walsh & Ramsey, 2012; Wray, 2012; Ryser, Schwamborn, Halseth, & Markey, 2011; Lewis, Shrimpton, & Storey, 1988; Storey, Lewis, Shrimpton, & Clark, 1988; Storey, 1986). Outside of Canada, the predominance of studies looking at resource extraction have been conducted in Australia (Mayes & Pini, 2014; Bailey-Kruger, 2012; Pirotta, 2009; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009). However, research focused on women’s experiences as long distance labour commuters and workers in resource extraction remains both limited and limiting. The research is limiting in terms of the analysis being conducted through a gender dichotomous lens (Costa, Silva, & Hui, 2006), resulting in modest findings regarding the potential distinctions between the experiences of male and female
workers. Thus, there is the potential to ignore, or overlook the unique and often nuanced gendered experiences of workers, and consequently any challenges and barriers stemming from intersections of gender are ignored. Moreover, this leaves further investigations curtailed by premature conclusions which suggest that future research within this area is unnecessary (Costa, et al., 2006). Gendered experiences affected on both systemic and social levels within resource extraction industries require scholarly address in order to understand the variegated and plural experiences of female workers. Issues such as gendered divisions of labour, male privilege through practices that reinforce hegemonic forms of masculinities, and ramifications stemming from the intersectionality of neoliberal values on gender, to name a few, deserve more attention.

Resource-based industries in Canada, located within the province of Alberta continue to endure and play a critical role in the current socio-political and economic fabric of Canada, even in the face of economic recessions and overall oil industry downturns. Resource based industries, particularly oil and gas industries, have been, and continue to be heavily associated with flourishing economic opportunities and growth (Angel, 2014; O’Shaughnessy, 2011; Hiller, 2009). Despite an overall oil industry downturn beginning at the end of 2014 that caused thousands of workers to be laid off, one of the largest oil sands companies announced in May 2017 that they plan on building more oil sands projects in Canada increasing the overall production in 2017 (Jamasmie, 2017). For more of the vagaries of the Alberta oil economy see section 1.5 in this chapter.

The industries’ continued male dominance presents a unique opportunity to research factors affecting women’s access and opportunities into primary sectors of this economy, as well as any challenges and barriers they may face. Contemporary feminist issues surrounding realities of gendered divisions of labour, gender wage gaps, gender on sectors of social reproduction of
labour, etc. are regularly questioned in relation to permeating hegemonic, or normative views. Therefore, research with transformative potential for shifts in such attitudes is timely and necessary. Research from Pirrota (2009), O’Shaughnessy (2011), and O’Shaughnessy & Krogman (2011) inspires a need for deeper levels of analysis into gender and resource extraction in Canada, along with a movement away from limiting, normative, binary treatments of gender in order to take into account various intersectionalities of gender (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011). As a result, this thesis grew out of a pragmatic need to address this limitation and analyze women’s experiences in ways that move beyond examinations that treat gender in terms of fixed dichotomies. Instead, this research examines the ways in which female workers negotiate their sense of belonging examining the ways in which participants reinforce, resist, reject and, or reconcile tensions of gender with male-dominated resource extraction industries.

Also, the need to examine these gendered experiences with an inclusive focus on the experiences of females who partake in long distance labour commuting as a means to work is an area that continues to be limited. The intersection of long-distance labour commuting is an important area of study for research on the gendered experiences of workers in resource extraction. The added impacts and challenges stemming directly from long-distance commuting can interact with work in resource extraction and gender in important ways that requires further study.

Resulting from this inclusionary focus of experiences associated with long-distance labour commuting, it was necessary to identify a study area from which female workers live, and commute from, as well as work. Also, necessary was to situate this study outside of the Maritime Provinces in order to expand the geographic focus of this research. The City of Kelowna (British Columbia) as a study area has several advantageous criteria for conducting this research from.
Drawing on principals of Poststructural Feminist Geography, this study was conducted as an exploratory case study utilizing a sequential mixed methods approach. Data from this study was analyzed through a critical discourse analysis, from a lens acknowledging the role and impact of ideologies of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinities.

1.2 The City of Kelowna as Study Area

The City of Kelowna is situated in the Central Okanagan Valley of British Columbia, Canada (see Appendix A) and is home to 127,380 residents as of 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017a), making up the largest portion of the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Kelowna. Ranked as the 6th fastest growing Census Metropolitan Area in all of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017b), the CMA of Kelowna consists of the City of Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, and Tsinstikeptu 9 Indian Reserve and was home to 194,882 residents in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017c), up from 179,839 in 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2012c). In the spring of 2014, Kelowna International Airport (YLW), the largest municipality owned and operated airport in Canada, introduced nonstop, daily, direct flights to Fort McMurray, Alberta in order to ease the growing demand of local workers in need of the service. The service, provided by WestJet Encore Airlines, serves an approximately 5,000 long-distance labour commuters from the Kelowna CMA to Fort McMurray annually, resulting in 30,000 trips per year, and tens of thousands in spin off monetary returns for the Census Metropolitan Area (McDermott, 2014). In 2015, the Kelowna international economic impact report estimates that close to 10,800 workers commute regularly from the city of Kelowna to Fort McMurray (Kelowna International Airport, 2016). Moreover, there were an additional approximate 7,000 working commute trips from Kelowna annually to RMWB bringing the total to about 18,000 (Kelowna International Airport, 2016). In addition to these numbers, there is also a largely undocumented population of long-
distance labour commuters travelling to Fort McMurray from Kelowna’s CMA via chartered planes, via by shuttles and buses, or driving personal vehicles. The Oil Sands Community Alliance conducted a survey in 2013 of members (from Oil Sands companies) and created the AOSA Aviation Activity Report (Oil Sands Community Alliance, 2014).¹ The report found that 14 oil sands companies needed additional commercial routes flying from Kelowna to Fort McMurray’s airport as a result of hiring workers from the city (OSCA, 2014). Additionally, 11 were interested in having more scheduled flights from Kelowna (OSCA, 2014). With regard to companies utilizing private or charter planes, 3 indicated that they use Kelowna’s international airport as their origin airport to fly out workers to their work sites (OSCA, 2014). Thus, by 2014 there was an undocumented growing demand for greater flight services from Kelowna due to a substantial long-distance labour commuter population residing within the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna. The increase in the number of long-distance labour commuters coming from small and mid-sized cities, such as those located in Kelowna CMA makes an interesting case study for understanding the lifestyles and challenges associated with this type of work. Also, it can illustrate the pervasiveness of long-distance commuting outside of major metropolitan regions such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Furthermore, in spite of the growth in the population of long-distance labour commuters in Kelowna CMA, there have been very few studies conducted within the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna, and other mid-sized cities apart from the Atlantic Provinces looking at the experiences of these mobile workers. Therefore, Kelowna’s CMA is an important study area for research investigating the experiences of long-distance labour commuters. This study was initiated during the tail end of the Alberta oil industry boom in 2014 and the subsequent downturn initiated at the end of 2014. Therefore, this study is

¹ This report was not released publicly. Information from this report was obtained by the researcher through contact with the Oil Sands Community Alliance (2014).
situated in an important temporal epoch for examining potential impacts of booms and busts on workers.

1.3 Rotational Work and Long Distance Labour Commuting in Canada

In the National Household Survey released in 2011 it was revealed that roughly 15.4 million Canadians generally commute to work (Statistics Canada, 2012a). Of these commuters, approximately 42,000 engage in what is referred to as rotational work, or long-distance labour commuting\(^2\) (Statistics Canada, 2011) to Alberta’s resource extraction industries alone. In 2004, approximately 67,500 workers from outside of Alberta had paid employment in the province making up 3.8 percent of Alberta’s total employee base. This number doubled to 133,000 in 2008, representing 6.2 percent of the provinces work force (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2015). The oil and gas workforce had an even greater percentage of interprovincial workers, with 11.5 percent (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2015). In the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (see Appendix B), 39,271 people made up the shadow population,\(^3\) which includes people living in project accommodations\(^4\). By 2014 this number

\(^2\) Long distance labour commuting, also known as fly-in/fly-out commuting defined as “all employment in which the work is so isolated from the workers’ homes that food and accommodation are provided for them at the work site, and rosters are established whereby employees spend a fixed number of days at the site, followed by a fixed number of days at home” (Storey & Shrimpton, 1989 as cited in Whalen, 2013, 5).

\(^3\) Shadow Population refers to, “any person who is present in the community and has a residence elsewhere may be considered to be a part of the temporary or shadow population. This person resides in the community for a minimum of 30 days or on a seasonal basis and is employed or has been employed by an industrial or commercial establishment in the municipality.” (RMWB, 2012c, p. 142).

\(^4\) Project accommodation according to the Regional Land Use Bylaw11 is, “a residential complex used to house camp workers by various contracting firms on a temporary basis, and without restricting the generality of the above, the camp is usually made up of a number of mobile units, clustered in such fashion as to provide sleeping, eating, recreation, and other basic living facilities” (RMWB, 2008, p. 8). Project accommodations “are defined as dwelling units
jumped to 46,686 (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2015). Totaling 25 percent, the province of British Columbia makes up the largest percentage of workers from outside the province of Alberta living in project accommodations located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2015). British Columbia also sends the greatest number of interprovincial workers to Fort McMurray with 26.5% in 2008 (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2015). Despite these findings, demographic information about Alberta’s long-distance labour workforce is sparse.

1.4 Resource Extractions and Gender

Alberta’s oil sands have traditionally been associated with a cowboy hero stereotype. It is seen as a male-dominated world fueled by a strength to penetrate the earth’s surface for extraction of the earth’s natural resources (Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; O’Shaugnessy & Krogman, 2011; Mercier & Gier, 2007; Fenwick, 2004; Miller, 2004), and more broadly emphasizing the association between strength, labour and masculinity (Wright, 2016; Thiel, 2012). Male workers make up the majority of resource extraction industry employees in Canada at 82.9% (RMWB, 2012b, p.118). However, the number of women working in resource extraction is growing. In 2014, approximately 38,800 women were employed in oil, mining, and gas, making up 22.7% of the total primary labour force (Alberta Industry Profiles, 2014) up from 21.3% in 2011 (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2014). Comparing this demographic to the number of women in Alberta’s total labour force, women make up about 45.5% of the total industrial labour force in the province, that is almost half of all workers (Alberta Industry Profiles, 2014, p.5). This is consistent with findings from the Mining Industry Human Resources Council’s 2013 report, which indicated that women make up 15% of all workers in Alberta’s oil sands, and 16% that are owned and operated by companies to provide lodging for their staff” (RMWB, 2012b, p.114).
in mining, while making up 48% of the total labour force (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2013). Of this population of women resource extraction workers in the RMWB, a growing 17.1% are mobile workers (RMWB, 2012b, p.118). While there has been a growing body of literature looking at the experiences of female workers in resource extraction industries particularly in Australia (see Mayes, 2014; Pini & Mayes, 2014; 2012; Pirrota, 2009), women in resource extraction industries in Canada have not received as much attention. Additionally, scholarly work on the experiences of women who engage in long-distance commuting in Canada are even more limited (O’Shaugnessy, 2011). Therefore, research on the experiences of women is imperative, especially given that more and more companies are recognizing that women are an “under-utilized talent pool” and their skills are necessary in resource extraction work (Petroleum Labour Market Information, 2014, p.6). The experiences of female workers and female long-distance labour commuters may differ in significant ways from the experiences of males, particularly due to the male dominated culture embedded within resource extraction industries. As a result, understanding these differences can be useful for companies looking to achieve greater diversity, and those looking to attract and retain more female workers. It is also useful for understanding the experiences and/or any challenges and barriers female workers may face with this lifestyle [mobile work]. This finding therefore can have both corporate and government level policy implications.

1.5 Oil Price Activity and its Impacts on Workers

Resource extraction industries subsist on a series of booms and busts that are influenced by the market economy and international oil price fluctuations. These fluctuations can have major impacts on the lives of resource extraction workers, and long-distance rotational workers. A China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) decision made in November of 2014, not to cut
production to curtail falling oil prices became the catalyst for a drop of 70% in the price of a barrel of oil in January 2015. That is an approximate 15% drop from December 2014, and approximately 40% from late June of 2014 (RBC Economic Report, 2015). By July 2015, the price dropped another 8% (“Oil Crashes 8 Percent”, 2015). Oil prices eventually dropped to “a fraction of the cost of extracting oil from the oil sands” (Ruddell, 2017, p. 215). The continued falling prices of a barrel results in a chain reaction of reductions in oil production (Ruddell, 2017). Consequently, many oil sands, plants, and camps were shut down, and more and more workers were being laid off in the tens of thousands, which can have many types of detrimental ramifications for workers. According to a report conducted by Petro Labour Market Information (Petro LMI) the number of workers in oil and gas related industries dropped significantly. For instance, the numbers of both indirect and direct workers dropped from 720,000 to 535,000 between 2014 and 2015 (Petro Labour Market Information, 2015), with 39% of that drop stemming from workers employed in oil and gas engineering construction (Petro Labour Market Information, 2015). Figures from the Canada-wide labour market outlook report from Careers in Oil and Gas show that employment rates dropped from 226,460 in 2014 to 198,315 in 2015 (Petro Labour Market Information, 2016) (Figure 1.1). Most likely, of the workers being cut, out-of-province rotational workers are some of the first to go. Since August 2015, approximately 23,000 jobs were lost, 4,500 direct layoffs, and 35,000 oil patch jobs were cut (Johnson, 2015). However, within two years of these layoffs, increases in the number of workers hired are expected as price of oil increases due to new OPEC contributors (Simon, 2017). As of February 2017, the price of oil increased to US$49.67/bbl (WTI)⁵ and US$35.68/bbl (WCS)⁶. With

⁵ “The West Texas Intermediate (WTI) price of oil, often a world reference price quoted in the media” (Economicdashboard.alberta.ca, 2017).
averages from March 2017 indicating a 52% (WCS) increase, and 30.8% (WTI) increase since the year prior (Economicdashboard.alberta.ca, 2017). Prices are projected to go up into 2018 (DiChristopher, 2017). These drastic changes reflected year after year, mirror broader trends of booms and busts experienced for decades.

In the 1950’s significant oil reserves were found in the Province of Alberta near Calgary (ucalgary.ca, 2001) along with bitumen sands in Northern Alberta (Turner, 2017) beginning the initial Alberta oil boom. In 1967 Extracting oil from bitumen began commercially for the first time (Turner, 2017). That coupled with a 1974 OPEC decision to raise the price of oil by 70% a new oil boom began (ucalgary.ca, 2001). What resulted was an initial surge in the number of fly-in-fly-out, or LDLC, workers to Alberta. The first major recession took place in 1982 and lasted till 1984, the cause of which was various political and economic factors, and resulted in a staggering 15% unemployment rate in Alberta. By the late 1990’s and much of the 2000s, a second major wave of oil booms were taking place due to significant global demand (Marchand, 2012). Towards the end of the 2000s the second oil bust emerged with the global financial recession in 2008. Although this recession had many consequences for workers in every tier of the economy across the world, the impact was marginal for the overall oil industry when compared to the impacts from the 1982 recession (Ruddell, 2017; Marchand, 2012). Continuing this predictive trend, another boom took place from 2006 and lasted till 2014 as discussed in detail above. The unpredictable, at times volatile nature of the oil and gas industry has a profound impact on workers’ overall quality of life and is an important area of study. The way these impacts further affect female workers, who make up a minority population is also an important area of research consideration.

---

6 Western Canada Select (WCS), the price obtained for many Alberta producers for oil (Economicdashboard.alberta.ca, 2017).
Figure 1.1: Oil Industry Employment Rate Drop Between 2014 and 2015

An exploratory study examining the experiences of female long-distance labour commuters, residing in the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna is needed in order to understand the needs of this population, and the challenges they may face. An exploratory study was conducted as oppose to an explanatory study due to the limited research on the experiences of female LDLC from Kelowna’s CMA to resource extraction jobs in Alberta. As a growing minority in Canada’s resource extraction industries, the experiences of women long-distance labour commuters should be better understood in order to increase opportunities for women in lucrative resource extraction
job projects, and other primary sectors of the economy. Little research has been conducted on the experiences of female long-distance labour commuters when it comes to their experiences with commuting, their workplace experiences, their wellbeing and overall quality of life, integrating into a male dominated industry, and their overall work-life balance when commuting from small or mid-sized Canadian cities. This study will aim to fill this gap in the literature.

1.6 Purpose of this Study

The principal aim of this exploratory study was to examine the variegated experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to resource extraction projects from the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna. The population of female long-distance labour commuters in Alberta’s resource extraction industry is growing despite maintaining a minority population status in the male-dominated Canadian resource extraction industries. Women’s minority status can have important impacts on their overall experiences and opportunities. With a growing population of long-distance labour commuters living in the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna, the Kelowna CMA makes an ideal location for a study such as this one.

Attention in this study will be focused on any challenges and/or barriers female long-distance labour commuters face when working in a Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo resource extraction job project, as well as the strategies they employ to cope with any existing barriers. Specifically, attention will be directed at how female workers reject, reinforce, and or reconcile existing tensions of gender with working in resource extraction. This study utilizes a sequential mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) in order to investigate the experiences of female LDLCs. The analytical framework was guided through a poststructural feminist framework (England, 2007; Harrison, 2006; Wylie, 2006; Haraway, 1991) and will be conducted through a critical discourse analysis of participant interviews (Lazar,
The purpose of analyzing from this perspective is to permit a deeper level of analysis into the experiences of female workers. Lastly, this study will make recommendations on improving the overall quality of life and workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to Fort McMurray.

The major research questions guiding this research are:

1. What are the major factors affecting the workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to Alberta’s resource extractive job projects?
2. What strategies do female long-distance labour commuters employ to cope with the challenges they face in a turbulent, male dominated resource extraction industry?
3. What corporate and other recommendations can be implemented to improve the current experiences of women LDLC workers?
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

Globalization of the world’s economy, along with advances in technology leading to rapid diffusion of information, has facilitated an increase in overall levels of labour mobility. The spatial scale at which individuals around the world commute for work has dramatically increased in the last half century and people are becoming less reliant on spatial proximity when it comes to decisions regarding where to live and work. One example of an extreme form of this labour flexibility is referred to as fly-in/fly-out commuting (Whalen & Schmidt, 2016; Sharpe, Ershov, & Arsenault, 2007). Fly-in/fly-out — also known as long distance commuting, or long-distance rotational commuting, mobile work, and transitory labour migration — is a term for mobile work by which an individual regularly travels to and from a resource-based job (Angel, 2014). This requires workers to spend extended time living in accommodations away from home, usually in work camps. A particular, systemic form of long distance commuting oriented around resource extraction work originated in the 1950s with offshore oil and gas companies located in the Gulf of Mexico (Jones, 2014; Storey, 2010). However, it is now seen throughout the world, particularly in Australia and Canada (Austin, 2006; Burke, Matthieson, Einarsen, Fiskenbaum, Soiland, 2007; Öfner & Ramsey, 2014) due to their large resource extraction industries. In Canada, fly-in/fly-out is common within the resource-based extractive industries including oil/bitumen and gas extraction. The largest proportion of Canada’s oil reserves and subsequent oil industry is located in Northern Alberta’s Wood Buffalo Regional Municipality, which includes the Service Area of Fort McMurray, and spans approximately 68,454 square kilometers (RMWB, 2011). Wood Buffalo is one of the largest regional municipalities in North America (RMWB, 2011), with boundaries formulated strategically to encompass the total resource
extraction industry located within Alberta. Canada’s oil industry is one of the largest oil industries in the world. In recent decades, Alberta has seen unprecedented economic growth stemming from its natural resource industries, which has led to many labour shortages that reached their height in the 2000s. Thus, the province of Alberta continues to have great drawing power for labour migrants around the country.

Fort McMurray’s airport serves approximately 714,500 passengers per year, which is about seven times its total population (RMWB, 2011). The mobile workforce population in Wood Buffalo was first recorded at 5,903 individuals in 2000 (RMWB, 2012a). A decade later, in 2010, the mobile workforce population grew to 23,325; and just two years later, in 2012, this population rose 60 percent to 39,271 (RMWB, 2012a).

Of the total population in Wood Buffalo, the mobile worker population makes up 30.9 percent (RMWB, 2012a), with the largest portion of workers coming from British Columbia (RMWB, 2012d, p.10). Of the 24.6 percent of mobile workers coming from British Columbia, an estimated 5,000 to 18,000 workers commute from the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna (Kelowna International Airport, 2016; McDermott, 2014).

The oil sands support much of the Alberta’s economy, with 146,000 people employed in forestry, fishing, mining, quarrying, oil and gas in August 2017 up from 137,400 in August 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2017h). Oil and gas industries account for 16 percent of Alberta’s overall GDP in 2016, making it the largest industry in the province (Government of Alberta, 2017). With so much growth, and in order to meet the demand for workers in Alberta’s extractive industries, companies have increasingly relied on growing the number of their female workers (and other minority groups), in addition to establishing fly-in/fly-out commuting (Angel, 2014; Costa et al., 2006).
In 2014, approximately 38,800 women were employed in oil, mining, and gas, making up 22.7 percent of the total labour force (Government of Alberta, 2014). Expanding the demographic to include women in every sector of resource extraction beyond the primary one, women make up 45% of the total industrial labour force in Fort McMurray, that is, almost half of all workers in Alberta’s resource-based industries (Government of Alberta, 2014). Of this population of women workers, 17.1 percent are mobile workers (RMWB, 2012b). Despite the growing number of female mobile workers to Alberta’s resource extraction industries, and the significant number of women working in the resource extraction industry as a whole in Northern Alberta, very little is known about their experiences with this particular lifestyle, particularly the impacts of the gendered division of labour, social expectations of gender roles, inequality in job mobility, as well as impacts on their family/home life, including work-life balance, family stress, and parenting.

Studies on the topic of mobile work and resource extraction are conducted in various countries by scholars from diverse and multi-disciplinary backgrounds including geography, environmental studies, economics, engineering, sociology, health, and psychology. Only a few of these studies have addressed the experiences women who commute long-distance to resource extractive work in Canada, reflecting the lack of scholarly attention to empirical research on female mobile workers in Canada. Most of the relevant research has been conducted on fly-in/fly-out mining workers in Australia. Since little is known about women’s particular experiences with long-distance labour commuting and resource extraction, a greater understanding of their experiences may point to policy suggestions, relevant for both employers and governments, that would improve working conditions for women, and equity in general.
2.2 The Australian Perspective

In this next section, a brief review of findings from some key Australian studies will be conducted. Unlike in Canada, literature on gender and long-distance labour commuting, work in resource extraction, and mining from Australia is quite extensive, spanning from, at least 1981 to 2017 (Laplonge, 2017; Laplonge, 2016a; 2016b; Terrill, 2016; Misan & Rudnik, 2015; Vojnovic, Michelson, Jackson & Bahn, 2014; Mayes, 2014; 2010; 2008; McDonald, Mayes & Pini, 2014; 2012; 2010; Brueckner, Durrey, Mayes, & Pforr, 2013; Pini, Mayes & Boyer, 2013; Mayes & Pini, 2012a; 2012b, 2011; 2010; Lahiri-Dutt, 2012; Bailey-Kruger, 2012; Pirotta, 2009; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009; Rhodes, 2005; Gibson, 1994; Williams, 1981). In addition, there is also a substantial number of literature on LDLC, or fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) overall from Australia (McKenzie, 2010; McKenzie, McKenzie & Hoath, 2014; Perry & Rowe, 2014; Weeramanthri & Jancey, 2013; Carrington et al., 2012; Carter & Kaczmarek, 2009; Guerin & Guerin, 2009) to name just a few.

The Australian literature on women and resource extraction examines the experiences of women as both wives/partners and mothers (Mayes, 2014; Rhodes, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 1999; Gibson, 1994), as well as the “mining women” (Laplonge, 2017; Mayes & Pini, 2014; Pirotta, 2009) from various perspectives. Findings emerge contextualizing the characteristics of the ideal mining woman, which can be summarized as: a woman in her 20-30s, who is middle class, white, specifically Anglo, a lone worker, does not challenge the status quo, professional and clean, prepared to work hard, independent, and self-reliant. Additionally, there was an attitude in these industries that women are individually responsible for, and effective at, creating a space for other women in resource extraction, where only exceptional women can succeed (Mayes & Pini, 2014). Also emphasized was a discourse of business and more broadly capitalism. In a previous
article, Mayes & Pini (2008) demonstrated that there was little to no change occurring in terms of gender and mining in the previous 20 to 30 years (Mayes & Pini, 2008). Women continue to represent a minority population in fields that are more precarious (Mayes, 2014). Furthermore, women experienced overt sexualization in forms of jokes and name calling, etc. (Mayes, 2014) from the imbued masculine culture (Mayes & Pini, 2010), evidence of gendered divisions of labour (McDonald, Mayes & Pini, 2010), and consequences from mine closures having greater impacts on women (McDonald, Mayes & Pini, 2014; 2010). Women tended to cope through efforts of conforming to the dominant male culture by downplaying their femininity (Pirotta, 2009). A greater need for more research involving critical approaches was articulated within this literature also providing an example of such research models (Vojnovic, Michelson, Jackson, & Bann, 2014). This is only scratching the surface of the research conducted in Australia, research contributions that have proliferated research on women in resource extraction overall, and inspiring research outside of Australia. However, research situated within various national and local places that acknowledge varied subjectivities of resource extraction workers and of those from the broader extraction site communities is still required. This study aims at making such a contribution grounded in a particular Canadian perspective.

2.3 Under-representation of Women in the Primary Resource Sector

Alberta’s oil sands have historically been, and continue to be, a heavily male-dominated industry. For instance, in the 2006 census there were 75 women working in oil and gas extraction out of the 700 total workers in Wood Buffalo (Statistics Canada, 2006), totaling 10% of the worker population. A decade later in 2016, 2,615 women worked in mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction out of 13,255 total workers in Wood Buffalo (Statistics Canada, 2017e) growing to about 19.7% of the total worker population, and 16% of the total oil sands mining
force (see figure 2.1) (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2013). Therefore, women continue to represent a minority population, however they are growing. The distribution of women’s participation in selected occupations is illustrated in (figure 2.2), which shows that women are most prominent as heavy equipment operators, at just under 15 percent (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2013). In comparison to mining where women make up 16% of the primary industry, they represent 48 per cent of the overall labour force (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2013). “This trend is also observed in other resource sectors” in Canada (Mining Industry Human Resources Council, 2013, p.15), as well as in Australia where women also represented 15% of the primary mining industry (Mayes, 2014).

Despite the increases in women’s participation in the primary sectors of resource extraction, they continue to remain overrepresented in the lower paying secondary and tertiary sectors of the industry (O’Shaughnessy, 2011; Ranson, 2009) consistent again with findings from Australia (Mayes, 2014). This distribution of women among the different sectors of resource extraction mirror broader, global patterns regarding gendered divisions of labour.

**Figure 2.1: Female Participation in Mining, Oil Sands Mining, and Other Industry Sectors**

2.3.1 Gendered Division of Labour

Like all industrialized countries, Canada’s labour force reflects an “occupational segregation of gender”. According to Ranson (2009):

Women in particular tend to cluster in certain sectors of the economy, and in certain kinds of work. In 2006, some 67 percent of all women (compared to only 30 percent of men) were working in either teaching, nursing, and related health occupations, clerical or other administrative positions, or sales and service occupations… In 2002, they made up only 22 percent of professionals in the natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics. (Ranson, 2009, p.112-113).

Women continue to be overrepresented in unpaid labour, or what is also referred to as caring work (Ranson, 2009; Fenwick, 2004). This gendered pattern is evident within the context of skills training programs aimed at primary resource sectors, where women’s participation is also limited (Fenwick, 2004). The consequences of the gendered division of labour “create[s] barriers for women’s motivation and ability to participate in formal and informal learning opportunities” (Fenwick, 2004, p. 173). Gender is a major factor in the spatial organization of women in employment, “such that women have access to only particular kinds of physical locales as sites of employment” (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008, p. 79). Consequently, their efforts to access paid
labour are limited in certain sectors of the economy, particularly in resource-related activities. Such barriers exist in key extractive sectors such as mining, logging forestry, and oil drilling (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Reed, 2003; Halseth & Lo, 1999). Within the context of forestry communities in British Columbia, a comprehensive policy review revealed how “women were considered part of forestry communities only when they were attached as partners to male workers who were considered the dominant bread winners” (Reed, 2003, p. 373). In the province of British Columbia as a whole, women made up 10 percent of the logging workforce, and 28 percent in all other jobs related to logging in British Columbia (Reed, 2003).

In RMWB, women employed in oil, mining, and gas, made up 22.7 percent of the total labour force in 2012, but 45 percent when the secondary and tertiary sectors are included (Government of Alberta, 2014). Jobs in the secondary and tertiary sectors include service work, and jobs facilitating the overall social reproduction of labour required for the subsistence of resource extraction industries. Women’s overrepresentation in the secondary and tertiary sectors reflects traditional patterns of the gendered division of labour, which denote these sectors as being more appropriate for women. The low numbers of women taking part in skills training programs reflects the distribution of women in the higher skilled primary jobs in trades and resource extraction. Concerted efforts, such as federally-funded initiatives and programs to encourage greater numbers of women to enter into trades, mathematics, sciences, and engineering, are required to alter this pattern (Smart, 2016).

2.4 A Culture of Masculinity

The gendered division of labour in resource extraction work is reinforced by the structural embeddedness of a hegemonic, masculine culture (O’Shaugnessy, 2011; McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Miller, 2004). The term ‘hegemony’ within the scope of this thesis concerns the
Gramscian concept, which “implies an active struggle for dominance” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832). Hegemonic masculinities are relational in that they constitute subordinated “others”, which most readily include women but are not exclusive to women (Connell, 1995). For instance, they include Indigenous people, people with disabilities, immigrants, blacks, non-English speakers, LGBTQ, etc. Resource-based industries have systemically produced and simultaneously privileged masculinity and “male culture”. This hegemonic masculine culture has become an intrinsic part of the oils sands’ culture, delineating resource extraction work as being primarily, or even exclusively, for men, and thus privileging traits that are stereotypically associated with masculinity. As mentioned earlier, the Northern oil sands were associated with frontier masculinities and a cowboy hero stereotype (O’Shaugnessy & Krogman, 2011; Fenwick, 2004). This stereotype included notions of oil workers as romanticized cowboys, tough guys who work long hours, macho men who endure heavy labour, and are ultimately the breadwinners (Connell, 1987). This stereotype also works to create an opposing dialectic identity and role for women, which sees them as being dependent on the male breadwinner. In addition, this stereotype narrows the diversity of opportunities that are deemed appropriate for women, creating barriers for their acceptance as oil workers because it is seen as deviating from their prescribed “appropriate” role. Other identities ascribed to women in resource extraction are the gold digger, the lady truck driver, and the devoted mother (O’Shaugnessy, 2011). Further embedded is the assumption of homogeneity among women, often ignoring the intersectionality of their gender and its interactions with other characteristics such as their class, race and ethnic group, etc.

Women’s gendered experiences within resource extractive industries are determined, influenced, and even reinforced at diverse interactions of material and discursive practices
Material practices can be understood as “the social structures, conditions, relations, and ways of organizing directly and indirectly related to resource extraction that interplay with the daily lives of men and women” (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011, p.137). Discursive practices however, “are the production and reproduction of subject positions, ideologies, stereotypes, cultural beliefs and other forms of negotiated meanings around gender and resource extraction may be place-specific or have more global resonance” (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011, p.137). These practices interact on varying scales of the resource extraction industry, and reveal deeper dialectical tensions regarding notions of women’s “roles” related to their gender. Additionally, these practices influence women’s own interpretations of their gender and role relative to men as they construct their identities within male-dominated industry contexts. This issue will be addressed in greater detail in a later section.

The hegemonic masculine culture that underlies the social, structural, and systemic characteristics of resource extractive industries governs how they function, and become critical areas where women find the greatest barriers and challenges.

2.4.1 Assimilation into a Dominant Masculine Culture

Research involving women in resource extraction would be incomplete if it did not include some investigation of women’s experiences working in a male-dominated world as it relates directly to their gender. Such scholarly investigations are few, but help to reveal a more in-depth understanding of women’s more nuanced experiences, and their far-reaching impacts. One way to address this gap is through a qualitative investigation of women’s negotiations of their gender and/or identity when working in male dominated industries (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011). Insight into how women negotiate and reconcile any tensions around their gender can reveal those aspects of their experience that are problematic, and can further help to illuminate the
subtler existing barriers they face. Studies in this area have begun to reveal some of these insights, although mostly in the Australian context.

Due to the masculine culture that pervades resource extractive industries, women have had to find alternative ways in which to successfully integrate into the dominant culture in order to be accepted and successful. One of the ways that women have negotiated their acceptance into male dominated resource-based industries is through assimilative coping strategies such as downplaying their “femininity” (Pirrota, 2009; Miller, 2004). In one study, a woman explained how she coped with integrating into the dominant male culture: “When you go to the field, you don’t take a purse because you’re really rubbing that female helplessness thing in, and you put all your junk — the feminine hygiene stuff — in your little pockets” (Miller, 2004, p. 54). This explanation highlights this participant’s strategy for “fitting in with the guys” through conformity with regards to her practice of dress. She makes invisible any outward representations of femininity such as wearing a purse. In addition, she styled her discursive style to match that of a stereotypical male voice when making reference to feminine hygiene articles as “junk” and to her pockets as “little”. The notion of conformity was a common strategy utilized by women in order to achieve integration and overall acceptance within the dominant masculine culture. The success of women’s integration is determined based on how well they follow socially constructed rules of behaving within resource extraction: “If you don’t adapt to the rules, it is harder to be accepted” (Miller, 2004, p.56). Women consequentially reinforce the hegemonic precedence of masculine culture inherent in resource extraction work in these cases as a coping strategy.

The mere presence of women in resource extraction is itself insufficient for the integration of policies to support women workers and to shift attitudes associated with their acceptance into resource-based jobs. Simply permitting women to work within resource
extraction does not automatically garner their acceptance into the overall mass culture (Ranson, 2009; Miller, 2004; Reed, 2003). Women’s practices of conformity by abandoning or masking any characteristically feminine traits in order to find acceptance was also a theme in Pirotta’s 2009 study.

They dressed in a masculine fashion, stopped attending to their hair, stopped wearing makeup, stifled any signs of emotion, restricted “girlie” topics of conversation, and were careful about expressing any discomfort regarding aspects of the male environment in which they worked and lived (Pirotta, 2009, p.49).

The pressure women faced to assimilate into the dominant masculine culture was felt so strongly that women had, in some instances, even “wished some female colleagues would not challenge the status quo” (Pirotta, 2009, p. 49), a finding that is consistent in House’s (1980) study and Miller’s (2004) study:

They’re hiring more and more women — right now there are six engineers in the office I work in: three men and three women! And we just hired another woman — there's going to be more women than men in the field office — and I was quite upset — I don’t know how to work with women... Now they think I can work with women — oh my god! I don’t know how to do it. Like, that's an adjustment! What's with all the girls? Hire more men! (laughing). (p.56)

Defending this position, one woman reasoned that “it is their [the men’s] environment. You’ve chosen to enter a male dominated environment. If you go in with a lot of high expectations of the way that they should behave, then that’s when it creates dramas” (Pirotta, 2009, p.49). This woman has accepted that resource extraction jobs/industries are in fact part of a male domain and belong to men. Therefore, women entering into it are not only an unexpected presence, but any efforts to challenge men’s behavior leads to unnecessary tension or conflict.

Capitulating to the status quo through conformity is one strategy that has been identified in the literature as a way for women to integrate into working in a male-dominated resource extraction industry; however, it was not a strategy universally adopted by all female workers.
The unexpected presence of women in resource extraction creates tensions for women regarding living and working in a man’s world that they must reconcile. If the taken for granted understanding of resource extraction is that women do not belong in the primary sectors, which are instead dedicated to men, what rationale is provided for the presence of women in those sectors? More to the point, how do women facing barriers within the industry reconcile this existing tension? One attempt to provide such a rationale was simply to make an exception of women who work in resource extraction viewing them as an “oddbity”, or “not normal” for women more broadly, or generally for women outside of resource extraction (Miller, 2004). Conceptual understandings of what role women ought to play in resource extraction industries have left them for the most part on the periphery of primary resource-based positions (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Ranson, 2005; Fenwick, 2004; Reed, 2003; Halseth & Lo, 1999). Consequently, women who are hired in primary sector positions must reconcile dualities surrounding their gender and identity as a resource worker, for example between that of “female” and “engineer”. For some women, the methods of resolving this tension is simply to remove the title “woman” or “female”, which commonly acts as a prefix, from their unofficial title or label. Instead of being referred to as a “women geologist” or a “female engineer”, for instance, they simply prefer to be referred to as simply a geologist or an engineer, thereby not having to make any emphasis on gender specifications (Miller, 2004). However, this only works on a discursive level, because aspects of their gender that are observable are not as easy to erase.

2.4.2 Sexism and Discrimination

In more recent studies women tend to report more positive work experiences and an overall improvement in the working environment of the oil sands since the 1970s (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Costa et al., 2006; Miller, 2004;). Women’s access to work in resource extraction has also
greatly improved since the 1970s. As a result, more women turn to resource extraction sites for work when opportunities are scarce outside the resource-based industry (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008). Women also report some advantages associated with their gender within the context of resource extraction. For instance, women have certain advantages over men when it comes to help seeking, such that they have the opportunity to freely ask for help or assistance without the repercussion of mockery (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Miller, 2004). A participant in Miller’s study explained how,

because I’m a woman, they [the men] give me more leeway, ‘I can explain it to her because she’s a woman’ – which may not be good, but it makes me more comfortable asking questions. If a man asked them, they might think less of him (Miller, 2004, p. 50).

Another woman said: “I think we get more respect, and we definitely get more cooperation than any of our male colleagues” (Miller, 2004, p.50). Male workers are more tolerant of their female colleagues asking for help than their male colleagues. The exception made of women in this regard is consistent with hegemonic understandings by which men are viewed as being more competent and self-reliant than women. Thus, the benefits granted women in this case is problematic because it accepts and conforms to notions of male superiority and female dependence, even while women and men are doing the same work and have the same qualifications. The woman quoted in Miller’s (2004) study addressed this contradiction by acknowledging intuitively that “it [being able to ask for help] may not be good” (p. 50). She recognized the patronizing treatment of women in her workplace, but goes no further with her critical assessment of the potentially problematic nature of this reality. Instead, she accepts this status quo of male superiority as a coping strategy subsequently reinforcing her own marginalization. Through discursive examinations inconsistencies within women’s own
interpretations of their place in a male-dominated world relative to their gender are revealed in important ways.

The theme of women reinforcing their own marginalization through concerted efforts to fit into and ultimately succeed in resource-based industries is a recurring theme in the literature on women workers in resource extraction (O’Shaughnessy, 2011; O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011; Miller, 2004; Reed, 2003). Incidences of patronization and lowered expectations regarding perceptions of women’s competence, skills and abilities is a form of implicit sexism that constitutes women’s position as secondary relative to their male colleagues. Other ways women have experienced implicit forms of sexism is through treatment of condescending paternalism and extreme chivalry (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Miller, 2004).

The ways in which women workers experienced discrimination in resource extraction industries were not limited to treatment they received from their male colleagues, but were evident in the material practices used by the industry at large on systemic and policy levels. One significant example of a discriminatory material practice is the lack of policies that support childrearing and other and family issues. The lack of family policies has an ongoing impact on women’s ability to enter and continue working in high paying resource extraction jobs, and will be taken up in the next section.

2.5 Glass Ceiling: Motherhood and Engineering

Mothers of young children constitute the smallest sub-group of women engineers in resource extraction industries. It is a seemingly accepted reality in the oil sands and other resource-based jobs that work within these industries is incongruent with motherhood (Ranson, 2005). This reality is reinforced through a general lack of effective family policies or other supports. Initiatives aimed at establishing family-friendly policies are not currently prioritized or
adequately in place. As a result, mothers of young children are systemically excluded from accessing opportunities to work and maintain long-term careers within these industries (Costa et al., 2006; Ranson, 2005). Returning to the notion of the gendered division of labour, women continue to play the prominent caregiver role in the household (Ranson, 2009). While achieving an effective work/family balance creates challenges for fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) fathers in resource extraction, it is more pronounced for women fly-in/fly-out (fifo) workers (Costa et al., 2006).

Women FIFO workers with young children report strong feelings of helplessness and guilt. For instance, one woman said that “when personal issues arise at home, (I am) unable to leave [my] job due to commitment[s] unless [there is a] serious situation” (Costa et al., 2006, p.5). This conflict makes working far away from home unrealistic for mothers who want to be consistently available to their children, and leaves fly-in/fly-out mothers torn between emotionally and financially providing for their children. Current efforts to amend policies to include key family issues such as maternity leave and other family supports are minimal to absent. Additionally, the improvements that have already been made to family friendly policies are insufficient and low on the priority list (Ranson, 2005). Ignoring family issues is also in line with hegemonic systemic structures that function to privilege masculinity and male dominance. One often cited challenge specific to motherhood and work in resource extraction is the ability to retain women workers (Costa et al., 2006). For example, in cases where women did have long and successful careers in the oil industry, once they had children, tending to their children took precedence over their work careers. Thus, retaining these highly skilled women is a challenge. Women cope with the need to balance work and family life by either refusing promotion, which would require longer hours or leaving the familiarity of their current position, or leaving the industry altogether. Women would consciously downplay their career goals in an effort to accommodate family responsibilities.
(Ranson, 2005). The lack of family policies reflects an overall lack of priority given to issues consistent with traditional women-centric roles, which again works to reinforce male dominance in resource extraction. The mobility time and spatial distance required from most LDLC arrangements exacerbate barriers linked to motherhood in ways not equivocally linked to fatherhood or parenthood more generally. This gendered difference stems from reinforced normative values that delineate childrearing and housework as women’s duty (Farkas, 1986), and is legitimated through various social structures associated with capitalism (Anderson, 1997), religion, science, and law, etc. (Lorber, 1994). Therefore, future policies need to acknowledge these gendered differences in ways that enhance inclusivity.

While the experiences of women in resource extraction industries has steadily improved over the last several decades, much remains to be done to reduce sexism and broaden opportunities for women. An important area for research is to delve deeper into issues of implicit sexism in the form of systemic structures that narrow women’s opportunities to work in certain fields, particularly in the highly skilled, higher paid segments of the economy. Such studies can have important policy implications by highlighting issues and improving opportunities and working conditions for women.
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

3.1 Overview

The primary objective of this thesis is to analyze the varied experiences of female long-distance commuters from the City of Kelowna, who work in resource extractive industries located in Northern Alberta (RMWB). The main research questions guiding this research are: (1) What are the major factors affecting the workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to Alberta’s resource extractive job projects? (2) What strategies do female long-distance labour commuters employ to cope with the challenges they face in a turbulent, male dominated resource extraction industry? And, (3) what corporate and other recommendations can be implemented to improve the current experiences of women LDLC workers?

The study results will be presented in two parts addressed in the discussion and analyses chapters (chapters 4 and 5). The first part of the discussion and analysis will cover the results of the survey, and will address the first research question, particularly the push/pull factors influencing participants’ decisions to take part in long distance commuting from the City of Kelowna to RMWB. This will spatially/geographically contextualize the study, and help to understand influencing factors for undertaking resource extraction employment. These results will also provide a context for the discussion of the interview data, which responds to the second and third research questions.

Poststructuralist feminist theory (England, 2007; Harrison, 2006; Wylie, 2006; Haraway, 1991) provides the theoretical and analytical framework for the study design and for interpreting the results. Poststructuralism is strongly linked to Jacques Derrida’s (1966) term “deconstruction”, which is “based on the notion that the meaning of words happens in relation to sameness and difference” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, p.90). Poststructuralism accounts for
perspectives that are often neglected, left out, “othered”, or concealed through dominant discourses, and are exposed and deconstructed often by those texts that are different or deferred of meaning (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, p.90). A critical discourse analysis of the narrative data from interviews is used to focus on tensions of gender that are problematic for women and further marginalize them in resource extraction work (Lazar, 2007; Moss, 2005; Wodak & Mayer, 2001; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 1995; 1992). The impacts of neoliberalism (Herod & Lambert, 2016; Brown, 2015; Evans, 2015; Springer, 2012; Vosko, Campbell, & MacDonald, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Peck, 2004; Chomsky, 1999) and hegemonic masculinities (Gonzalez & Seidler, 2008; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) will further inform the analysis.

Data for this research were collected between May 2016 and September 2016 utilizing a mixed-methods approach: a survey, followed by semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009).

The remainder of this chapter will describe the research design, including the epistemological framework utilized, the study area, study population, sample design, and data collection procedures and tools.

### 3.2 Epistemological Framework for Conducting Critical Discourse Analysis

This thesis draws on principles of poststructuralist feminist geography to form a guiding framework for applying critical discourse analysis to topics of gender, power, labour and mobility (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006; Harrison, 2006; Wyile, 2006; Moss, 2005). The study is situated in Alberta’s resource extraction industry, and examines various material and discursive practices (Orlikowski & Scott, 2015; O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011) women use
that reinforce, reject, resist, and/or reconcile tensions regarding gender in relation to long distance commuting and employment in resource extraction.

For the purposes of this study, the term ‘material practices’ refers to “the social structures, conditions, relations and ways of organizing directly and indirectly related to resource extraction that interplay with the daily lives of men and women” (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011, p.137). The term ‘discursive practices’ on the other hand include:

[T]he production and reproduction of subject positions, ideologies, stereotypes, cultural beliefs and other forms of negotiated meanings around gender and resource extraction, [which] may be place-specific or have more global resonance. The ways in which gendered and sexual identities are performed, or inscribed onto bodies, landscapes and other spaces (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011, p. 137-138).

Only a limited number of studies have addressed the experiences of female resource extraction workers in Canada, especially long-distance labour commuter workers (Dorow, 2015; O’Shaughnessy, & Krogman, 2011; O’Shaughnessy, 2011; McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Costa et al., 2006; Fenwick, 2004; Miller, 2004; Reed, 2003; Anger, Cake, & Fuchs, 1988). Even fewer investigations focus on the impacts of material and discursive practices these women use to negotiate their sense of belonging and position as workers in this male-dominated industrial sector, where they continue to represent a minority population (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011). Applying a qualitative method and using a poststructuralist feminist framework for conducting critical discourse analysis permits a deeper, richer investigation of the disparities concerning gender in resource extraction and varying realities affecting female workers.

3.2.1 Poststructural Feminist Geography and Critical Discourse Analysis

It is important to begin the discussion of this study’s analysis by first defining how critical discourse analysis (CDA) contributes to answering the guiding research questions of this study. In order to do that it is necessary to take a couple steps back beginning with the genesis of
this research study. In its early stages, this study was intended as a traditional mixed methods study recognizing the benefits of integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. This was perceived as having added potential benefits for making a strong case when it came to outlining, and arguing for the relevance of the policy recommendations (O'Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011). However, with a smaller sample size than expected, the study evolved overtime (more on this later). The study questions nevertheless remained relatively untouched due to the exploratory nature of this study. For instance, the broad scope of the research questions relating to overall experiences and coping strategies of the participants, serve to leave the door open for topics and areas the researcher may have neglected or missed due to the researcher’s own outsider status. This status limits how much the researcher can know (Naples & Sachs, 2000; & Campbell & Schram, 1995; Harding, 1987). As the analysis progressed, the study continued to evolve, an evolution that is accepted in qualitative research (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2013). Throughout the analysis and organization of the research findings, continuously engaging with the researcher’s own reflexivity was vital. The main questions to contend with throughout this stage were, whose voice is being reflected in written final results, the study participants, or the researcher’s? And, what power structures are being set up during this process of analysis? For instance, research is most often written by the researcher(s), with some nuanced exceptions such as with co-written Participatory Action Research. This ultimate power over the final voice gives certain power privileges to the researcher with respect to how they are positioned in relation to their participants in regard to knowledge production (Kobayashi, 1994). There are various approaches in critical discourse analysis (CDA) that work to tackle such discrepancies in power dynamics. Three approaches outlined by Saukko (2003) include, (1) the objectivist mode, (2) the subjectivist mode, and (3) the dialogical (Saukko, 2003, p. 75). This is certainly not a
comprehensive list. Inherent to this study’s main objective is an examination of female LDLCs lived experiences as it relates to understanding factors affecting these experiences, and the resulting coping strategies used. Further, was a desire to look deeper at the social, discursive and material structures and, or practices that affect these experiences through conducting a critical discourse analysis.

As alluded to previously, there are multiple methods or approaches for conducting CDA. The approach this study takes on follows Foucault’s shift on discourse from discipline to technology and the notion of ‘critical ontology of the self’ (Foucault, 1988 as cited in Saukko, 2003, p. 77). This approach recognizes individuals as acted upon objects, and simultaneously as active subjects making sense of their experiences, or identities through processes involving taking stock of the discourses that may have constituted their individual subjectivities and experiences (Saukko, 2008; 2003; Foucault, 1988; 1982). From this perspective, individuals are not “liberated” from discourse, but rather have a critical awareness from which they interrogate these constituting discourses (Foucault, 1988 as cited in Saukko, 2003, p. 77). It is also relevant to recognize that the findings of this study are situated and contained within a set of beliefs and values existing within the socio-spatial, and temporal context of the research study including the study areas, research participants, and the researcher’s. This adds an additional layer of factors underpinning and limiting the overall generalizability of the findings to which these findings are bound. Therefore, the CDA conducted in this study aims to maintain the integrity of the participants and not render them as token women (Saukko, 2003, p. 90), through self-reflexive processes discussed above. Also, by asking participants to contend with perceived stereotypes of female LDLCs and resource extraction workers. The assessment of stereotypes permits participants to engage with existing discourses on women in this male-dominated world, and the
role and impact of these discourses on their lived experiences. Looking at tensions and contradictions in the participants’ narratives enable an analysis of existing discourses and in this case, some of the ways in which existing discourses can work to marginalize female LDLCs.

The struggle sometimes with qualitative research is that it is often “messy”, because experiences are plural and individual (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994), and therefore may not fit nicely into pre-prescribed monolithic boxes or approaches for conducting an analysis. The recognition of subjectivism, and the limited and partiality of knowledge that can be known, is a common critique of critical, poststructural, and post, poststructural research from more positivist perspectives. However, that is not to say there is no value in these approaches. Rather, it emphasizes the complexities that exist within research on people, due particularly to exiting pluralities among individuals and groups.

Ultimately, what was most congruent and useful for this study was first, during the interviews permit participants to introduce other relevant topics not captured in the interview guide, therefore minimizing the researcher’s control. Second, to include entire participant quotations in the final written draft and not to cut and splice particular passages from quotes, thus maintaining the participants’ voice. Third, was to consistently engage with aspects of the researcher’s own reflexivity (Haraway, 1988) and subjectivity as a white, mid 20s, graduate student, with no personal experience with long-distance labour commuting, or work in resource extraction, located outside of RMWB. Lastly, was to emphasize the lens from which the analysis is being conducted from, in this case acknowledging ideologies of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinities as a basis for the analysis. These ideologies do not intend to serve as being prescriptive, diagnostic, or disciplinary. Instead, they serve to emphasize, and not dismiss the potential role these existing ideologies have on female LDLCs experiences and the subsequent
discursive and material powers they may constitute. While these precautions do not eliminate all the potential biases, they to render them, if not fully, to at least an acceptable level. In other words, the critical discourse analysis conducted in this study looks at the ways in which women speak about their lived experiences, and how they negotiate existing tensions of their gender within the male dominated resource extraction work they occupy through acknowledging these ideological lenses. Additionally, this analysis evaluates the material practices existing in resource extraction raised by participants that work to either, reinforce, or resist tensions of gender for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of female LDLCs experiences, and any potential barriers they face. One last consideration of this discussion is to outline how power is conceptualized from this perspective. Power cannot, or should not be interpreted as being, either exclusively vertical, a top-down oppressor with subordinated others, or as exclusively horizontal, various social agents co-constructing and repeating relational power structures in line with Butler’s understanding of performativity (Butler, 1997, 1993, 1990). Instead, Power from this perspective is an intersection of the two, mutually informing each other. Poststructural theory expands what counts as expert knowledge by valuing the experiences of those at the margins, or on the periphery, by taking into account the plurality and partiality of knowledge, and the influence of varied individual subjectivities. Poststructural theory also aims at challenging issues of power and create avenues of emancipatory change. These goals of poststructuralism are congruent with this approach of conducting critical discourse analysis, and are therefore utilized as guiding the analytical framework.

The adoption of a feminist perspective for this study fits with its focus on issues of power and gender, “whether power is conceived as something to be held, exerted, deployed, mobilized, sought after, or refused, or as something structural and inevitable, despotic, and concentrated, or
dispersed and everywhere” (Moss, 2005, p.42). Similarly, discourse analysis is also concerned with constructs of power. For instance, Foucault analyzed the workings of societal institutions to “[consider] how historically and culturally located systems of power/ knowledge construct subjects and their worlds. Foucauldians refer to these systems as ‘discourses’” (Punch, 2009, p. 198). Tensions of power, related to gender within the context of resource extraction industries, have been documented in research since at least the mid-1970s (Miller, 2004; Ranson, 2003; Ranson 2001; House, 1980). Accounts of sexist practices and evidence of the gendered division of labour was the basis for the majority of these tensions (Miller, 2004; Ranson, 2003; Ranson 2001; House, 1980). More recent studies have shown that the more overt forms of sexism, such as cat calling and lack of opportunities, have greatly diminished, leading some scholars to conclude that such studies are no longer required (Costa et al., 2006). Others have argued in favor of having more studies conducted on women that deviate from traditional positivist investigations that treat gender as part of an opposing and fixed category. Therefore, they encourage more studies to adopt more critical approaches to research, revealing often overlooked distinctions between the experiences of male and female workers (Linstead & Brewis, 2004). In fact, some argue that “women’s lives are so easily and so often trivialized and ‘disappeared’ that a commitment to taking women seriously needs conscious and continuous reassertion, so that the work of making – and keeping – women’s lives visible is far from complete” (Nelson & Seager, 2005 as cited in DeLyser, 2011, p. 84). Feminist scholarship on mobility has emphasized that it is a gendered activity that privileges males by allowing them greater spatial scope and availability. Consequently, men and women understand and experience mobility in distinct ways (DeLyser, 2011; Uteng & Cresswell, 2008), which can be revealed by investigating the “power
and politics of discourses and practices of mobility” in various contexts (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006, p.4).

Acceptance or rejection of the notion of gender as a fixed and universal category, which is hotly contested in feminist scholarship (Ramazanoglu, 1993; Lazar, 2007; Mansvelt & Berg, 2010; Hesse-Biber, 2014), adds another layer of complexity to the analysis. Some scholars argue that an understanding of gender as fixed ignores both individual diversity and gender fluidity (Prasad, 2012; Linstead & Brewis, 2004; Butler, 1990). Important intersectionalities exist alongside gender that incorporate other aspects of a person’s identity and subjectivities (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Hesse-Biber, 2014; Lazar, 2007; Crenshaw, 1989). A fixed categorization of gender leads to perceptions of gender as being two sides of the same coin, where one side represents a valorized male, and the other represents the lesser “other” female. Such oversimplification fails to encompass the complexities and dynamism inherent within individual gender subjectivities (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Poststructural feminists have argued against this fixed binary categorization of gender, and instead maintain that social constructs of socio-economic status, race, ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. intersect in important ways and influence individual gendered subjectivities (Collins & Bilge, 2016; Mansvelt & Berg, 2010; Sheller & Urry, 2006; Crenshaw, 1989). If individual subjectivities and perspectives are ignored, certain voices are pushed to the margins, and certain knowledges subjugated (Ward & Mann, 2012; Mansvelt & Berg, 2010). Foucault described the concept of subjugated knowledges as “a whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges…unqualified or even disqualified knowledges” (Foucault, 2003, as cited in Philo, 2007 p. 347; Haraway, 1988). In other words, they have been left out or ignored by dominant,
mainstream culture, and the academy (Hesse-Biber, 2007). Applying a poststructural framework for conducting feminist research facilitates a critical stepping out of, and challenges, hegemonic thinking that would inhibit the goals of this research study.

For the purposes of this thesis, poststructural feminist geography frames the analytic stance taken for conducting a critical discourse analysis of the constructed meanings of gender and all other aspects of identity (Hubbard, Bartley, Fuller, & Kitchin, 2002). Investigations into how individuals construct and negotiate gender have been conducted by a variety of scholars. For instance, through changes in how individuals present their bodies (Goffman, 1979), the relationship between bodies and capital (Bourdieu, 1984), through an understanding of gender as performative (Butler, 1990), and through language (Derrida, 1966), to name a few influential ones. Operating from a poststructural lens allows for analysis of “meanings” that can come from texts and language to reveal how various subjectivities are unstable and dependent on relationships with other texts, contexts and persons. Additionally, these “meanings” interact with intersectionalities of other subjectivities of an individual (Hubbard, et al., 2002). For instance, other aspects of an individual’s identity, such as race or ethnicity, etc. may influence a woman’s experience in a resource extraction industry. Thus, gender subjectivity, or one’s gendered identity, is not mutually assumed, but interacts with other aspects of one’s identity subjectivities to influence subsequent social positioning (Collins, 2015). In addition, a female’s experience is constituted and reproduced relationally through interactions with her male and other female colleagues (Connell, 1987). Women’s experiences with work are also influenced by spatio-temporal contexts (Vosko, Campbell, & MacDonald, 2009) such as the work place, or through cultural stories (Trice, 1993). As well, they are influenced through the re-production of certain taken-for-granted norms enacted by social agents within certain occupations, particularly those
which are male-dominated (Johnson & Scholes, 2002). Thus, female workers’ experiences and their subsequent negotiations of self-identity, and their sense of belonging are fluid, not fixed.

### 3.2.2 Poststructuralism, Commuting and Gender

According to Edensor, “commuting belongs to an enormous range of spatio-temporal contexts within which multiple rhythms are produced and interweave” (Edensor, 2011, p. 189). Long-distance labour commuting to Alberta’s resource extraction industry consists of rhythms that are institutionalized and circadian. They can be both regular and irregular, depending on the commuter worker’s rotation schedule. The rotation schedule of workers also affects the intensity, tempo, and degrees of predictability. Rhythms of commuting are also constituted by place or sites that anchor the range of travel, and by time (Edensor, 2011), for instance during periods of booms or busts. The spatial scale at which long distance workers commute can span international borders, and cross multiple racial, gender, ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds.

Wood Buffalo’s project accommodation sites (RMWB), are couched within the larger Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo that has an increasingly diverse population, with 14.6 percent of residents born outside of Canada (RMWB, 2012a, p. 58), and 43.8 percent born in Canadian provinces other than Alberta (RMWB, 2012a, p. 58). The project accommodation sites are however majority Caucasian at 80.4%. The next largest ethnic group is Indigenous, referred to in the report as “Native Aboriginal” at a marginal 6.8%, followed by African at 4.1% (RMWB, 2012b, p. 120). There is a disproportionate gender distribution with 82.9% of the population being male, and 17.1% female. Lastly, the dominant age range of the population is between 21 and 59 at 91.3% (RMWB, 2012b, p. 118). The minority status of women staying in project accommodation sites underscores the notion of mobility, in this case long-distance
commuter work, as a “gendered activity”. Women’s minority status also may provide evidence for the gendered division of labour in resource extraction.

3.2.3 Positionality and Reflexivity

Qualitative researchers often introduce their own positionality in relation to their analysis, and often use reflexivity as a research tool. Reflexivity can be understood as “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (Berger, 2015, p. 220). One purpose for engaging with reflexivity is to acknowledge how knowledge is limited, partial, and situated, which is fundamental to poststructural feminist, and critical geography perspectives (Rose, 1997; Haraway, 1991; Harding 1987). An additional purpose is to use the privileges of the researcher to foster or inspire change, which is also fundamental goal of feminist and critical geography (Cope, 2002). Therefore, in this next section I will engage my own reflexivity on my various subject positions relative to study participants. In this section I will write from the first person.

In this study, I shared the same gendered subject position of my participants/interviewees, as well as the same racial position in terms of being visibly white. While these elements of shared identify fostered some degree of ‘insider status’ for me as researcher, my lack of personal experience with long-distance commuting or working in resource extraction made me an ‘outsider’ in relation to the research topic. The shared racial and gendered subject positions permitted an equal power balance when interviewing participants and with initial rapport building. My status as a graduate student carried some degree of privilege, but no greater status than the interviewees, most of whom had some postsecondary education and held lucrative jobs.
My unfamiliarity and lack of experience with both long-distance labour commuting and resource extraction work seemed to make recruiting study participants more challenging, especially with initial unsuccessful attempts to obtain the co-operation of employers. Recruitment strategies had to be reconfigured to operate at an individual rather than an organizational level. During interviews, my own ‘outsider status’ (and, perhaps, my relative youth) may have made it natural (as a novice) to ask basic questions and to probe for details, particulars, and clarifications.

3.3 Study Areas

Kelowna was chosen as the primary study area for several reasons: (a) in the spring of 2013 Kelowna International Airport (YLW) introduced daily, direct, flights to Fort McMurray to service the growing demand and convenience of LDLC workers in the area travelling to Fort McMurray; (b) the city’s LDLC worker population is expected to grow; (c) research examining LDLC workers in small and mid-sized cities expands awareness of long-distance labour commuting as an alternative to work-based relocation in Canada; and (4) The Province of British Columbia is the source for about one quarter of the total LDLC workforce in Wood Buffalo’s resource extraction projects (RMWB, 2012c).

When Okanagan area employers were asked about the biggest challenge for retaining employees, 43.9 percent cited their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to employers in Northern British Columbia and Alberta (COEDC, 2014). In February of 2016 Kelowna made the news when it was ranked as the number 1 “worst city” in Canada to find a job (Tencer, 2016); the unemployment rate had risen in to 7.6 percent (Kavcic, 2016a;
Tencer, 2016) and 7.8 percent by January 2017 (Kavcic, 2016b; MacNaull, 2017). Moreover, Kelowna ranked as the fourth least affordable place to live in all of Canada behind Vancouver, Victoria, and Toronto (Demographia, 2015), increasing overall cost of living. With the combination of a lack of affordable housing and a lack of competitive wages, along with the number of mobile workers living in the City of Kelowna and surrounding areas, Kelowna makes an interesting case study for studying experiences tied to long-distance labour commuter work.

The rationale for choosing the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo as the second study area is that it has experienced unprecedented economic growth from its resource extraction industries, requiring a larger mobile workforce, of whom a substantial, growing minority (17.1%) are female. It presents a unique case study for understanding the experiences of women working in a male-dominated industry. A case study approach was conducted over ethnography due to time constraints.

### 3.4 Research Design & Procedures

This qualitative study employs an exploratory case study method (McNabb, 2016) based on a survey of nine women to gather a broad sense of why women commute long distance to resource extraction jobs, and how they describe their work experience. To learn more about gendered, problematic aspects of their work experience through open-ended questions, face-to-face interviews with six women (five of whom were a subset from the initial survey) were conducted.

All of the participants were screened for eligibility before the consent form was distributed, alongside the questionnaires. Approval for eligibility required that participants lived

---

7 In July 2017 Kelowna had an unemployment rate of 3.6 percent (Statistics Canada, 2017f), lifting job growth by 4.2 percent since January 2017. These types of fluctuations are ongoing.
in Kelowna (or one of the electoral districts within the Okanagan, listed in Appendix C)\(^8\), had
commuted long-distance within the last 5 years, and had worked within a resource extraction
industry. The type of job held was not limited to a particular sector (primary, secondary, or
tertiary) in order to capture potential variegation among experiences within these sectors and not
limit potential sample size. However, participants had to have worked on an extraction site, and
not, for instance, a downtown office in Calgary, or corporate headquarters. Subjects were
excluded if they were under the age of 19, could not speak, read, or write in English, or were not
Canadian citizens, or did not have permanent residence status. Preliminary screenings confirmed
that each participant met the outlined eligibility criteria.

The 68-item questionnaire was composed of mostly closed-ended questions, and was
available for completion online or in paper form (see Appendix E). The socio-demographic
variables examined were: age, marital or relationship status, education, occupation, and income.
This data was collected to provide a socio-demographic profile that situated participants, and
provided relevant background information where issues of participant intersectionality and
positionality were concerned.

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with a sub-set of the survey respondents to
learn more about the gender dynamics that make long distance commuting and resource
extraction work problematic for women, how women cope with any issues, and what they would
like to see changed to improve conditions for women (see Appendix F).

### 3.5 Target Population

The target population for this study is female resource extraction workers who reside in
the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna, and engage in long distance commuting to work in

---

\(^8\) British Columbia Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2015.
the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. To be eligible for participation a participant first had to be (self-identify as) female, and have experienced long distance commuting for resource extraction-based work. Long-distance commuters are defined as “individuals who commute to and from resource development projects and who live temporarily in work camps, lodges, hotels, private rental suites, or personal recreational vehicles (RVs)” (Angel 2014, p.2-3). Second, a participant had to have experience working on a resource extraction site within the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. The type of jobs women workers had to engage in was not limited to a particular job type, or sector. Thus, the females in this study had a variety of jobs (for list of occupations refer to chapter 5). All of the participants lived in a camp while working at the work site. Participants had to have a minimum of 6 (non-consecutive) months of experience within the last 5 years. This timeframe was chosen in order to be broad enough to increase opportunities for the recruitment of participants, and narrow enough that participants’ memories of their experiences would not be heavily compromised.

3.6 Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

It is not well documented how many female long-distance labour commuters live and commute from Kelowna CMA, or even British Columbia, and no list of female mobile workers in Kelowna exists, it therefore was not possible to obtain a representative sample of study participants. A small sample of participants was recruited through a purposive snowball sampling technique. Initial recruitment involved generating a list of HR companies of resource extraction job and oil projects, as well as oil sands companies and work camps (see Appendix

---

9 A purposive sample is a method of non-probabilistic sampling that involves “selecting certain units or cases ‘based on a specific purpose rather than randomly’” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p.173).
10 Snowball sampling is a “nonprobability sampling method, often employed in field research, whereby each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing” (Babbie, 2010, p.193).
D). Then, the researcher systematically contacted each company (via telephone, email, and/ or fax) regarding the study. All these companies received an initial contact letter informing them about the study, a copy of the consent form (see Appendix G & H), and recruitment posters (see Appendix K & L). Also, the researcher met with the lead recruiter of a major oil company with various oil sands projects in a head office in downtown Calgary. These initial strategies were met with resistance and elaborate, time-consuming steps to obtain corporate permission. Other challenges were due to geographic distance, outsider status, the study being conducted in Kelowna and not the RMWB, and many work camps shutting down (see section 3.7.1 for details of barriers for recruitment). An additional recruitment strategy utilized was outreach through the personal contacts of the researcher. This strategy resulted in the recruitment of the first two participants, and these initial participants provided names and contact information for other eligible female mobile workers.

Data collection for this study took place between the months of May 2016 and September 2016, in two phases that made up a sequential mixed methods design11. The first phase involved distributing questionnaires to nine eligible volunteer participants who were given a choice to respond online via UBC hosted Fluid Survey/Survey Monkey, or via a hard copy of the questionnaire that was mailed to participants. The second phase involved follow-up personal interviews with a sub-set of the survey participants, which lasted between 45 minutes to 2 hours. Not all the participants who participated in phase one participated in phase two.

Originally, a sample size of 30 participants was planned for this research; this is considered a minimum size for meeting the objectives of exploratory research, which is to generate the most

---

11 Sequential mixed designs “In these designs, mixing occurs across chronological phases (QUAL, QUAN) of the study, questions or procedures of one strand emerge from or depend on the results of the previous strand and research questions are related to one another and may evolve as the study unfolds” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 151).
in-depth information of the topic under investigation from the fewest cases until no new information is elicited, in other words, until saturation\textsuperscript{12} is reached (Baker, Edwards & Doidge, 2012; Mason, 2010; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Due to recruitment challenges, which are described in the next section, a sample of 30 could not be reached. Therefore, emphasis was placed on the second phase of the study. In-depth interviews allow for rich, thick descriptions of participants’ experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128), and corresponds with the goals of both exploratory and feminist research.

3.6.1 Mixed Methods Approach: Challenges and Barriers Encountered

This next section covers some important challenges and barriers encountered while conducting this particular research study, and will also be written in the first person. While these types of experiences are not typically included in most theses, it can be useful to share these challenges as they help to illuminate the drastic and unpredictable ways that study design is forced to evolve from the researcher’s original intentions. Also, it emphasizes how research can be “messy” (Lincoln, & Denzin, 1994). By outlining some of my own challenges, I acknowledge that not all research projects are straightforward, even the ones that initially appear so during their commencement. While experiencing challenges and barriers during research are relatively common and even expected, they are rarely reported. Experiencing challenges in research is especially common in social research involving living (human and animal) participants. This is even more likely when conducting qualitative research or working with marginalized populations. The reason relates to an insight from critical epistemological perspectives that not all forms of subjugated knowledge can be known and predicted prior to actual engagement with

\textsuperscript{12}“Saturation in purposive sampling occurs when the addition of more units does not result in new information that can be used in theme development” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 183).
participants (Haraway, 1988). Intersections of insider and outsider status are also key issues from this perspective (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, et al, 2001), which was true for this study. Exploratory studies are often utilized to explore topics, populations, and study areas where very little research has been conducted, thus little is known. In these cases, a researcher sets out with a particular, oftentimes quite broad research purpose in an effort to learn as much as possible. During the fieldwork phase however, some information that the researcher initially thought were relevant as a focus of study become less pronounced or irrelevant, whereas new areas become more critical. Because little is known about the subject by the researcher initially, the scope of the study can evolve in ways that could not be predicted. In other cases, there are unexpected challenges of feasibility or even access to a pool of potential research participants. I encountered two of these situations during the course of my fieldwork.

The first major challenge I encountered during the course of this study was access to participants. I had only one personal connection to the oil industry, a family member on the periphery of the industry, not located on an extraction site. This in and of itself was not a problem because recruitment can take many forms, and I was optimistic. The initial research proposal for this research study was defended and accepted by the supervisory committee in October 2015, and ethics approval was received within the same month. Recruitment subsequently began through contacting local companies from trade unions to various trades and mobile work agencies. Agencies were contacted through a systematic process of calling, emailing and visiting (local) agencies in person, providing each agency with an initial contact letter indicating the purpose of study and contact information for both the primary (thesis supervisor) and secondary researcher (graduate student). During this initial phase of recruitment, the first difficulty emerged. The agencies located in the Okanagan served only workers who
commuted within the province of British Columbia. For various reasons, agencies located in Alberta were not co-operative. Most of the oil camps were in the process of shutting down, or were already shut down and had no service. Recruitment for this study was conducted during the oil industry downturn and a period of employee layoffs, which has important spatial and temporal implications for this study. Responses with agencies varied from “That is tough …. I’m not sure …. sorry about that …. I’m not even sure where you could go to find these people” to “it’s a very busy time for us”. The most common response when calling a camp, regardless of time or day, was a dial tone, out of service signal, “this office is currently closed”, “this service is currently unavailable, goodbye”, or “I am currently away from my office”, every time a call was made. In two cases where contact with a person was made, a fake email address was provided over the phone. A total of 30 oil camps, 7 unions, 5 human resources companies, and 16 other related organizations, such as both Kelowna and Fort McMurray airports, were contacted for help with recruitment.

Simultaneously, I posted recruitment posters throughout Kelowna and went through personal contacts for participants. The main challenge here was my “outsider status”, because I had no real personal connection to the oil industry (only one peripheral). This meant that establishing a rapport with companies and getting their co-operation was crucial. Establishing rapport with organizations is further complicated by the length of time allotted for completing Master’s thesis research studies in most graduate programs, 2 years. The next step involved reaching out to companies located and operating in the province of Alberta, as well as the oil camps themselves. During November 2015, a three-day hiring event for a major oil company took place in Kelowna. This event offered the first local opportunity to connect with and meet face-to-face; the initial response from workers at the event was positive, with one woman saying,
“Thank you for doing this research, it’s very appreciated!” However, later attempts to re-connect were met with resistance in the form of a long series of “chasing” via email and telephone. Finally, a meeting was secured with the head recruiter at an oil company’s head office located in downtown Calgary. During this meeting, the research purpose was explained and a copy of the questionnaire was provided, along with the opportunity for the company to remove any question deemed problematic, in order to foster some collaboration and trust. Ultimately, the recruiter seemed agreeable, but she warned me that permission from the oil camps was necessary. The meeting ended with the promise of future interactions, such as the recruiter saying they would get in touch within the next two weeks, which never happened. Once back in Kelowna, all my follow-up emails were met with no replies. Insider and outsider status became critical once again, in this case because the researcher was not accepted as an insider, and further contact was denied in spite of repeated efforts to connect. By the end of March 2016 there were no leads and not a single participant for the study. In May 2016, I presented a paper at the 7th Annual UBCO Interdisciplinary Graduate Students’ Conference: “Bumping Zones: Bridging the Gaps between Disciplinary Research”. This presentation provided me with my first lead. A member of the audience at the conference provided me with the contact information of my first participant. This particular experience emphasized to me the importance of being visible as a researcher and not existing in a research silo. Shortly after, this participant provided another participants’ contact information and the snowball sampling method finally commenced in May 2016, 7 months after initial ethics approval and subsequent recruitment initiation. However, the limited number of female mobile workers meant that participants had very few women to refer me to, and most participants ended up providing the contacts to previous participants.
Other challenges included the oil industry downturn, which started just after this study began, and the major fire in May 2016 that forced 80,000 residents to flee from Fort McMurray and surrounding areas in RMWB. This fire caused the oil sands extraction activities to shut down temporarily (Hall, 2016) and become refuge camps for fleeing residents. This fire displaced many of those living and working in Wood Buffalo. The boundaries of the home site (Kelowna study area) were therefore expanded to include all the electoral districts in the Okanagan to increase the scope for reaching participants. Approval for this amendment was received in April 2016. By September 2016, I had collected 9 questionnaires and spoken to five women who consented to an interview. Attempts to recruit more participants continued until the end of October 2016, a full year after the study proposal and ethics application was approved.

Research committee meetings were conducted routinely with my supervisory committee, and it was at this stage that it was decided to focus on a more qualitative research study. The methodological framework and epistemological underpinnings guiding the study consequently shifted to maintain theoretical consistency and congruency, and account for the new qualitative approach. By the beginning of November 2016, all nine interviews were transcribed verbatim, then coded and analyzed.

The unforeseen barriers for reaching eligible study participants, required repeated assessments of the feasibility of data collection, and significant adjustments to the study design. One key factor was my outsider status at the institutional rather than personal level, with implications for who can be the “knower” broadened to include the institutional level. Negotiating rapport requires time, which can place enormous pressures on research feasibility (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007), particularity in graduate research.
Many of the challenges experienced could not be anticipated, such as the downturn in the oil industry and the disastrous fire. Issues of insider and outsider status were considered, but only negotiating rapport with study participants, not at the institutional level. To summarize, it is important to acknowledge these and other challenges involved in research, in order to identify and overcome such barriers in future studies.

3.6.2 Data Collection: Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was initially designed to be more comprehensive in scope to collect information on nine broad categories, once participants cleared the screening questions: (1) experiences regarding issues of attraction and retention in resource extraction work and long-distance commuting; (2) push/pull forces specific to the home community in Kelowna; (3) push/pull forces for working in Wood Buffalo; (4) stereotypes of female and male workers in resource extraction; (5) experiences with issues of sexism and discrimination working in a male-dominated resource extraction industry; (6) family relationships, long-distance commuting and coping strategies; (7) services available; (8) impacts of the oil industry downturn; and (9) demographic questions. Finally, respondents were asked to indicate whether they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

The questionnaire (see Appendix E) consisted of both open and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions had predetermined response categories, and the open-ended questions allowed for narrative responses. The benefit of using closed-ended questions is that it allows for uniformity of responses from a large number of people that can be subjected to quantitative statistical analysis. Open-ended questions allow room for the participants to choose the information they share, and the emergence of novel ideas or concepts not identified by the researcher (Babbie, 2010).
The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect background, demographic information of data about the attitudes, experiences, and intentions of female long distance labour commuters. The survey instruments were developed in accordance with the University of British Columbia’s ethical guidelines, and with careful consideration to ensure that the questions “are unbiased and balanced, and avoid jargon, wordiness, and ambiguity” (see Saris & Gallhofer, 2007 and Babbie, 2010 for guidelines). The questionnaire incorporated a mix of questions adapted from Angel’s (2014) interview schedule and O’Shaughnessy’s (2011) interview guide to fit a questionnaire style. This allowed a starting point from which to build questions, and further allowed for a comprehensive collection of questions regarding the experiences of female mobile workers. These questions ranged from topics on participants’ entry into resource extraction work, to gendered issues related to work in resource extraction and long-distance commuting. The questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity and length by three people: a master’s student familiar with quantitative questionnaire design; an individual with four years of experience commuting to, and working in, a Wood Buffalo oil sands project; and a woman whose second language is English. Pre-test feedback was used to improve the questionnaire, and the amended questionnaire was distributed to study participants. The final small sample size (9) made statistical analysis unfeasible.

3.6.3 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interview Design

Phase two of data collection and analysis involved in-depth qualitative data collected from follow-up personal interviews that allowed the researcher to explore anomalies or interesting cases from the responses to the questionnaire. The interviews also permitted the research participants to discuss issues they felt were relevant to their experiences, thereby diminishing the impacts of the researcher predetermining findings. Due to small sample size, the
emphasis of this thesis is a qualitative research project with a concentration on critical discourse analysis of participant interviews.

A critical discourse analysis was conducted on the interview data to gain insights into important areas of female LDLC’s experiences. Questions and topics guiding the follow-up personal interviews were determined prior to the interview, based on findings from the survey. These predetermined questions ensured that all areas captured in the initial questionnaire surveys were covered in the interview. However, participants also introduced relevant topics not included in the interview guide (See Appendix F). Therefore, the interviews were semi-structured\(^\text{13}\), allowing the researcher to ask questions in an order that best fit with the interviewee’s responses. Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewer to probe for elaboration on responses and allow the interviewee the freedom to speak on a topic, as they feel comfortable (Brinkmann, 2017). It was important during the interviews to allow participants to discuss any related issues they wanted to in order to reduce as much as possible the influence of the researcher. The development of the interview guide involved adapting questions from the initial questionnaire, thus it covered a broad range of topics. The total sample size for the qualitative portion of the study was five. This is considered an adequate sample size for qualitative research as “there are no universally accepted rules for sample size in qualitative research” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 182). Practical considerations such as the time constraints for graduate research had a major impact on the number of participants.

The interviews took place between May 2016 and September 2016. Participants were asked at the end of the questionnaire whether they were willing to participate in a follow-up, in-

\(^{13}\) “An interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.6 in Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 580).
depth interview. The researcher emailed, or phoned the respondents to ensure participants’ continued willingness to participate in the second and final phase of the study. Once participants confirmed, a time and location was arranged at the discretion of the interviewees for face-to-face interviews. Prior to the interview, participants were provided with another standardized consent form (See Appendix I) outlining that they agree to be interviewed, that their responses could be used for the research, and that they consented to the interview being tape-recorded. The consent form was also reviewed and explained to each of the participants at the start of each interview. Participants were welcome to ask any questions about the study, and were informed that they could withdraw from the second phase of study without penalty. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours based on the willingness of participants to continue, averaging about an hour and a half each. Participants were asked to elaborate on their responses to the open-ended survey questions and on the same themes. As a token of appreciation for their time, the interviewees were given an additional 10-dollar gift card to a coffee shop of choice. By the end of their participation, participants that took part in any length in the both phases of the study were given a total of $20 in the form of a coffee shop gift card.

3.6.4 Data Analysis: Coding and Data Analysis of Qualitative Interviews

All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Interview transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo11 qualitative data analysis software for Apple Mac, and were analyzed using thematic content analysis which involved multiple readings of the transcripts. The data were coded according to themes based on the major research questions. Coding of data and theme creation was based on conducting a discourse analysis of both material and discursive practices used by the study participants. Multiple categories were created during
the first phase of analysis to ensure that all possible themes could be captured. Through subsequent readings, parent nodes were created and previous categories were combined and refined into broader themes. These themes were further analyzed through a reading acknowledging how values of neoliberalism and existing hegemonic forms of masculinities were embedded in the ways female participants discussed their experiences. This level of analysis revealed areas of women’s experiences that go deeper into existing systemic and structural factors that influence and affect their overall experiences with both long-distance commuting and resource extraction work. The direct outcome of this is the formulation of policy recommendations that can have transformative potential (discussed in chapter 6).

### 3.7 Limitations and Biases

Due to the nature of this study as an exploratory case study, there are some limitations associated with the results. First, the sample was chosen utilizing a purposive snowball technique and therefore may contain a self-selection bias. Due to the fact that participation was voluntary, there may also be a bias stemming from the fact that those individuals who chose to participate in the study may be characteristically different in important ways from individuals who did not choose to participate in any, or all parts of the study. Consequently, the sample is not representative of the population and the results therefore cannot be generalized. However, the data can be transferable to similar populations (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Another limitation of this study is that all the participants were English speakers, and Canadian citizens (or had permanent resident status). Therefore, the experiences of temporary foreign workers, and illegal workers were not included in this study; their experiences may differ from those in the sample.

---

14 “You can organize nodes in hierarchies (parents and children) to organize your material and consolidate your thinking” when conducting analysis of qualitative data (NVivo version 11).
population. All of the participants were visibly white therefore, intersections of race and gender could not be analyzed. Lastly, participants were not screened for their ethnic background, thus intersections of ethnicity could not be reflected in this study.

3.8 Strengths

A key strength of utilizing an exploratory case study is that very little research has been conducted on the experiences of female mobile workers in resource extraction. This method permits a broad exploration of multiple factors impacting the experiences of female mobile workers in resource extraction, and is therefore useful for gaining insights into any challenges and barriers they face. Also, this method permits an examination of the various forces affecting decisions to work outside of a home community. These insights can provide a base of understanding that leads to future investigations by researchers, and help local policy makers concerned about access to adequate work and affordable wages for workers.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

All participants in this study were provided with an information letter with five screening questions (see Appendix J) a consent form (see Appendix H), and at the time of initial contact with the researcher. The consent form outlined participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time (without any risks or loss of the honorarium). The consent form also outlined that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained. Participants were informed that follow-up interviews would be audio-recorded. Furthermore, participants were directed to, and provided with, contact information for, the Research Subject Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Services, in case they had any concerns about their treatment or rights as a research participant. Lastly, participants were given contact information for both the researcher (graduate student) and the principal investigator (the student’s supervisor). Once participants returned their
signed consent form (or filled out the form on the online survey), further contacts with participants were initiated. Participants were provided consent forms prior to both phases of the research study. Before the interview, participants were reminded of their rights as participants and assured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained.

Following transcription, all possible identifying information, including names of colleagues, family members, friends, etc., along with street names, addresses, etc. were removed from interview transcripts in order to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Any information about specific resource extraction companies, including names of bosses and colleagues, name of company, union, etc. were also deleted in order to keep information about the participants and companies anonymous. Information on specific companies was not necessary for the completion of this study.

Because this study looks at the experiences of female workers, there were no issues of differential power between participants and the researcher, as the researcher is also female. Participants could therefore speak about their experiences without having to censor or edit themselves. Also, the researcher’s status was not an issue as the women in this study had education beyond high school, and were in lucrative positions. Most of the participants had incomes above $50,000 (one participant had an income within the $20,000 and $50,000 range). Since the participants did not represent a vulnerable group (homeless, youth, etc.), the coffee shop gift card honorarium worth $10 (up to two gift cards/ participant) was not enough to bait participants otherwise unwilling to participate. The honorarium given to participants served as small tokens of appreciation for participating in the study. There was no cost for participation, therefore reimbursement and compensation was not required.
3.10 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to review and discuss the research methods utilized for data collection and sampling procedures. The discussion consisted of an explanation of the two study areas and study sample. In addition, this chapter contained an explanation of the study design, including the design of the questionnaire survey and follow-up semi-structured interview, along with outlining the interview process and survey administration procedures.

Due to recruitment challenges, also discussed in this chapter, data collection took place between the months of May 2016 and September 2016. The dual phase of this research, questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview took place simultaneously. The sample size included nine participants for the survey and five for the interviews. Therefore, the total number of distinct participants was nine females with experience of long-distance commuting and working in resource extraction. The multiphase approach allowed for an initial investigation into the experiences of female mobile workers followed by more extensive, deeper questioning and probing to examine particular gendered aspects of female mobile workers’ experiences.
Chapter 4: Experiences of Female LDLCs Working in a Male-dominated Resource Extraction Industry

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents initial insights into the various factors that influence the experiences of female long-distance commuters, who work in male dominated resource extraction industries in Canada, based on the results of a survey of a small sample of nine women. It provides a backdrop for a subsequent analysis that is presented in the next chapter.

4.2 Age, Gender, and Marital Status

All nine of the study participants self-identified as female. Four of them indicated their marital status as being either divorced or separated; the remaining five were single. Two participants were in a relationship at the time of the interview. There was a broad age range spanning from 68 years to 23 years (born between 1948 and 1993), with an average age of 41 years. While survey participants were not asked about their racial status, all of the interviewees were visibly white (however they may not self-identify as being white).

4.2.1 Education, Occupation and Income

The education levels of the participants ranged from secondary school completion to some university education (See Table 4.1). Four participants had obtained a college diploma. Two had completed some college courses or apprenticeship, and one woman had taken some university courses. The remaining two did not respond to the education question.
Table 4.1: Female LDLCs’ Education Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Levels</th>
<th>N=9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some College/Apprenticeship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.K</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Experiences of Female Questionnaire Survey, 2017)

The participants held a variety of different positions within resource extraction. All nine worked on a resource extraction site. Three participants worked in administration, as a site administrator, payroll administrator, and a document controller. The remaining six had positions as water and wastewater treatment plant lead operator, lead HSE (health, safety and environment) advisor, shipper and receiver, warehouse worker, and train movement specialist. One woman had previously worked as a heavy machine operator. Therefore, the women mainly held jobs in administration, management, or another specialized area, not in construction work, or trades. This occupational distribution of the participants highlights the overall gendering of work in resource extraction. Some of the participants had worked in other sectors, such as hospital, government, and the service industry prior to working in resource extraction.

The women had been working in resource extraction for five years on average, with a combined total of 41 years of experience in resource extraction as a whole (see Table 4.2).
Table 4.2: Year Started in Resource Extraction & Long-distance Labour Commuting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Started in Resource Extraction &amp; LDLC</th>
<th>N=9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-2010</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.K</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Experiences of Female Questionnaire Survey, 2017)

The income of respondents ranged from between $20,000-$30,000 to over $100,000 (see Table 4.3 for distribution).

Table 4.3: Income Distribution of Female Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income distribution of female workers</th>
<th>N=9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20,000-49,999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50,000-74,999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75,000-100,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100,000+</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.K</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Experiences of Female Questionnaire Survey, 2017)

4.3 Entry into Resource Extraction and Work History

Five of the women had some familiarity with long-distance labour commuting and working in resource extraction from their relatives: two women had at least one parent who worked in resource extraction, and another three had one or more other relatives who worked in resource extraction.

When asked to rate the importance of various factors influencing their choice to enter resource extraction work (on a 5-point Likert scale), financial reasons were rated by six women as very important; as quite important by two women, and as moderately important by the
remaining one. Financial reasons held more sway as motivation than did good opportunities, skills training, or personal fulfillment, which were rated in descending order.

The primary mode of transportation while commuting to work was airplane, with seven women commuting more than 12 times a year, and two commuting between 6 and 12 times per year. During their stay in a resource extraction community, all but one woman stayed in an oil camp, and the remaining one rented.

Workers’ assessments of where to work, besides the aforementioned factors, are contingent on their opportunities for local work that is within their home community. When access to opportunities are limited or unavailable, individuals may decide to relocate to another city or province. In some cases, individuals may rely on long-distance commuting in order to have greater access to work.

A more in-depth discussion on the various push/pull forces influencing participants’ decisions to engage in long-distance labour commuting is taken up in the next section.

4.3.1 Pull Forces: Kelowna and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

One method, or framework for understanding factors that determine individuals’ migration choices at any spatial scale is by determining the influencing push/pull forces (Castles & Miller, 2014; Passaris, 1989). The push/pull models “identify economic, environmental, and demographic factors which are assumed to push people out of places of origin and pull them into destination places. ‘push factors’ usually include population growth and population density, lack of economic opportunities and political repression, white ‘pull factors’ usually include demand for labour, availability of land, economic opportunities and political freedoms.” (Castles & Miller, 2014, p. 28).
The role and effects of a rising cost of living in a city, which is indicated by a lack of affordable housing, increased cost of living, and a simultaneous lack of competitive wages, becomes a key factor for individuals regarding decisions about where to work. In 2012, 280,347 Canadians engaged in inter-provincial commuting, with the strongest net migration gains taking place in Alberta at 27,652 (Statistics Canada, 2012b). Economic opportunities functioned as the primary driver for the surge of in-migration to the province (Statistics Canada, 2012b). Long-distance commuting offers a broadening of prospective employment opportunities without having to relocate. However, long-distance commuting for work has its drawbacks.

When asked why they chose to remain living in Kelowna versus relocating in proximity to work, various factors were relevant to the decision made by participants. One of the main factors suggested by participants is proximity to their social networks. Most of the women had family and close friends living in Kelowna, and consequently did not want to relocate. For example, one woman said, “... I have many friends and immediate family that live in the Okanagan. My life is here. I will not move to a place just for work. I love the area and have made it my home. The valley is beautiful and a great place to come back to.” (Alexandra). Participants also mentioned feeling lonely while away in Wood Buffalo (discussed in greater depth in the next chapter). A feeling of loneliness is commonly identified among mobile workers in resource extraction as being a disadvantage or barrier (Angel, 2014). Loneliness acts as a main pull force for maintaining a home life in Kelowna, near workers’ social networks. Social networks are spatially tied to participants’ home community (Kelowna), and help to foster a strong sense of belonging. In addition to having their social ties in Kelowna, most of the participants also cited their appreciation of the beauty and temperate climate of the Okanagan.

15 The names used for participants are pseudonyms, to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity.
Valley as important. One woman combined these factors as her reasons for not considering a move: “I love the climate and scenery in the Okanagan, and have many close friends and family in the area.” (Anna). Anna reiterates the importance of social ties for staying in Kelowna. For one participant, having family living in the City of Kelowna was the only reason for staying in Kelowna, “I don’t enjoy living in Kelowna. My family is here so I stay.” (Lynn). Additionally, participants listed the available lifestyle in Kelowna, and more broadly in the Okanagan, as being another influencing factor behind their decision to remain living in Kelowna. For instance, Tiffany wrote, “I enjoy the variety of activities and cultures the community offers to its residents. I also enjoyed how often family and friends came to visit Kelowna.” Another woman, Amanda, simply stated, “family, friends, scenery, more to do here”, and Caitriona wrote, “I really like the weather and outdoor activities in Okanagan.” In some instances, participants stated that they would not move from Kelowna. One woman said, “The Okanagan is beautiful. It was never a consideration to move to Fort McMurray, nor would I have ever done so. The reason I would never move there is it is filthy and there is no sense of community, as every[one] is mostly transient.” (Christine). Another woman had previously lived in Fort McMurray with her family, then moved with her family to Kelowna and commuted, which she preferred. Her family ties were the primary factor:

“Originally, I resided in Fort McMurray because it was a move my entire family made from Ontario. When my parent's house was built [in Kelowna] in 2014, we all moved there, and my parents and I all commuted to Fort McMurray for work. So, for me, it wasn't about me not wanting to live in RMWB. I would have continued living there because it was home for me since 2009, but once the house in Kelowna was built it gave me the opportunity to begin commuting.” (Tiffany).

Homeownership appears to be another indicator of local ties and a reason to stay in a community, as one woman suggested: “I have lived in Kelowna since the 1970s, own my own home, family and friends are here.” (Josephine). Since housing costs are high in Wood Buffalo
(Dorow, 2015; Ryser & Halseth, 2011), this was another reason for not relocating when participants had a residence in Kelowna.

Sense of belonging, which is achieved in various ways, has expectedly major impacts on decisions regarding remaining in a particular place versus relocating to a new place. One such contributor, as discussed above, is the social networks available in an area. Sense of belonging was also identified by participants through feeling that Kelowna is home, as Alexandra said, “I love the area and have made it my home.” This is matched by a sense of not belonging in Wood Buffalo, as Christine stated, “there is no sense of community, as every[one] is mostly transient.” Christine’s statement is supported by findings from analysis of data from the 2011 National Household Survey, which indicted that two-thirds of the total population of 65,665 living in Wood Buffalo had lived outside the region 5 years prior (Statistics Canada, 2013a). The sense of transience in Wood Buffalo is also fueled by the high rates of long-distance mobile workers in the region. This high level of transience reinforces a dialectic relationship between attracting high levels of skilled labour migrants, and concerns of attachment to place and ideas of community. In other words, the very existence of long-distance workers promotes the maintenance of a landscape defined by pervasive transience that limits attachment to place and diminishes a sense of community (Pirotta 2009; O'Faircheallaigh 1995; Krahn & Gartrell, 1983). This is a topical issue for other regions as well, where high volumes of migration take place and questions regarding local attachments, regional nationalism, and local identities are concerned. It is important to note the relevance of plural societies (e.g., Aboriginals, non-aboriginal Canadians, and international labour migrants) on community, alongside effects of historical and contemporary colonization, relative to resource extraction and frontier ideologies (Dorow, Cassiano, & Doerksen, 2015; Dorow, 2015; O'Shaughnessy & Dorow, 2013; Shields, 1991). The
impacts of this history rebound on issues of community and subsequent feelings of attachment for residents and visitors.

To conclude, the major pull forces indicated by participants in this study regarding remaining in Kelowna were: family ties, proximity to social networks, the available lifestyle as well as the temperate climate, diversity in leisure-based activities, and the beauty and scenery of the Okanagan. Of additional importance was having purchased a home, and feeling a sense of home in Kelowna, or a lack of belonging in Wood Buffalo. Yet not all the participants were opposed to moving to Wood Buffalo if they had to, so not all the women shared this view.

So far, attention has primarily focused on the various pull forces articulated by participants for remaining in Kelowna. However, on the reverse are critical push forces influencing participants to work outside of Kelowna (broadly, the Okanagan). This will be the focus of this next section.

4.3.2  Push Forces: Kelowna and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

The women’s decisions to work outside Kelowna, or the Okanagan region, were associated with many push forces. Among these, the main factors were the high cost of living and lack of decent jobs in Kelowna. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo also has a high cost of living, which resulted in participants remaining living in Kelowna. However, the higher average in Wood Buffalo relative to Kelowna pushed participants to work outside of the Okanagan. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission identified that “the top destination outside of the Okanagan [for those living in the Okanagan to work] is Wood Buffalo with slightly less than 1% of Kelowna CMA residents commuting to the area for work in 2016 (Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, 2016, p.7). This is illustrated by the comments of several women. Nicole simply wrote, “Cost of living [in Kelowna] is high.”
Another woman cited, “the lack of decent paying jobs” (Josephine) as her main push factor. Alexandra wrote, “It is expensive to live here [Kelowna] without a good paying job or [being] part of a couple - I am single (which does have something to do with the fact that I work out of town...). I have worked in the government field (city, regional district, etc.), and as a single mother I found it very difficult to get by without taking a part-time service industry job in the evenings and weekends.” The answer from Alexandra showcases how even with a government job she required a second job to support her family. This becomes of critical importance regarding decisions about finding work that supplies an adequate income and working outside of Kelowna. Another example of high cost of living and lack of affordable wages comes from Caitriona who outlines the drawbacks of living in Kelowna, “The negative aspects are: very expensive, from housing, food, cost of living. The wages are below average, so if you want the nine-to-five job, you won't be able to survive on one income in a household. For example, I would make over $100,000 less a year, and once you have Fort McMurray on your resume none of the local companies will hire you.” Both Alexandra and Caitriona emphasized the added pressure that exists for lone parent mothers when it comes to income. This finding is consistent with that of Jones (2014) which found multiple barriers associated with being a single mother and access to adequate and affordable wages.

These factors are becoming increasingly topical for areas across Canada, but are intensified for the City of Kelowna due to its status as a retirement community and heavy tourist area. As a consequence, most of the local employment industry is made up of a high concentration of low paying service jobs and jobs within the health sector (Jones, 2014). These sectors are projected to have the greatest annual growth over the period of 2014-2020 (COEDC, 2014). For low-skilled workers, and even highly trained and educated workers, obtaining
adequate work and affordable wages are prominent issues. In fact, retaining workers has been an issue for Kelowna, despite the presence of two post-secondary educational institutions within the city (Okanagan College and The University of British Columbia) (McEwan & Teixeira, 2012).

The women did have some criticisms about living in Kelowna. One woman said that people in Kelowna do not understand the sacrifice it takes to long-distance commute: “The one thing that really bothers me about [the] Okanagan is the astigmatism [meant stigma] you get from working in Fort McMurray. People don't understand the sacrifices it takes to be away from your family for long periods of time” (Caitriona). The high level of tourism in Kelowna was the source of another woman’s complaint:

“My least favourite thing about living in the Okanagan is the multiplied population during the summer months due to tourism. It was always tough as a local to find spots to hang out with other locals without being bombarded by tourists with questions about the area. Sometimes, it just got to be too many tourists.” (Tiffany).

Other critical remarks were made about the lack of culture in Kelowna, that it was too much of a small town, and issues regarding the poor infrastructure to accommodate the expanding population. Unequivocally however, the main push force concerning working outside of Kelowna is the high cost of living tied to lack of adequate jobs and affordable wages, mentioned by all of the participants in this study.

Another aspect of the financial reasons that motivated the women to seek and accept employment in Wood Buffalo, particularly during boom periods, was the lack of competitive wages and benefits in Kelowna; the women rated this highly as a factor influencing them to work outside of Kelowna (broadly the Okanagan). In fact, employers in Kelowna acknowledge that their inability to provide competitive wages and or benefits is their biggest challenge for retaining employees (COEDC, 2014). Yet, the cost of living in the Okanagan is high, and seven of the women indicated that this was “very important” as a reason for working in Wood Buffalo,
while the remaining two rated it as “quite a bit” important, and as “a little” bit important. Thus, all the participants identified lack of competitive wages and/or benefits, along with the high cost of living in Kelowna, as reasons for their decision to work outside of Kelowna and in Wood Buffalo.

Other factors the participants were asked to rank were: limited work hours/seasonal or part time work, housing affordability, and low demand occupations. In response, five women rated limited work hours/seasonal or part time work as “very much” important; five rated housing affordability as “very much” important; and five rated low demand occupations as “very much” important (note: that these are not the same five for every answer). Therefore, these factors also influenced the women’s decision to work outside of Kelowna and surrounding Okanagan Region.

When it comes to long-distance labour commuting, various push and pull forces affect decision-making, specifically for female workers. There are inherent limitations and barriers associated with both commuting from the home community, and working within a male-dominated industry. While some of these limitations are not necessarily exclusive to the experiences of female LDLC workers, others are specific to them. For instance, work in a male-dominated industry can produce unique challenges for female workers, strictly as a consequence of their gender. Some of these limitations will be addressed in the following section.

4.4 Gender and Place: The Case of Alberta’s Resource Extraction Industry

So far, this chapter has dealt with female participants’ experiences as associated strictly with place, whether the home location and community (Kelowna), or the work location and community (RMWB). However, place interacts with issues of gender in important ways and Alberta’s resource extraction industry is no exception. Some of these interactions have already
been alluded to from participants’ answers in the previous sections, such as the impacts of being a lone parent mother.

Within the discussion of work in Canada’s resource extraction, one very important aspect that has been historically overlooked is the ways in which gender interacts with, and subsequently impacts, the experiences of workers. The impacts of gender have particular effects for workers depending on whether workers identify as female or male, typically privileging the latter. These impacts have varied effects, again depending on the interplay of multiple existing subjectivities on an individual, and the intersectionalities between them (discussed in-depth in Chapter 5). Researchers have recently gained great insights into both the broad and nuanced experiences of male and female workers within resource extraction industries (Angel, 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011). Research focused on gender within the context of resource extraction is important for issues affecting the everyday life of workers, which can have broad emancipatory impacts where issues of social justice are concerned. It is important to conduct research that moves beyond gender and acknowledge the importance of various intersectionalities of LDLC’s subject positions, such as age, race ethnicity and ability etc. Such investigations can have even greater insights into gender modalities, and consequently have broader beneficial outcomes (Dorow, 2015; Simon-Kumar, 2011; Ferguson, 2008; Arat-Koc, 2006). However, given the exploratory nature of this thesis, and the recruitment difficulties, this discussion is limited to evaluations of gender alone. Despite this, it is important to be conscious that all aspects of an individual’s subject position concurrently affect the experiences of LDLC workers, and they are rarely if ever mutually exclusive (Collins, 2015). Furthermore, interactions between an individual’s various subject positions are also impacted by subsequent interactions with existing social and material practices produced within the resource extraction industry. The
remainder of this section will focus on aspects of the resource extraction industry’s social culture and its effects on the experiences on female workers with a direct emphasis on issues of gender. This section will serve as the starting point for the discussion in chapter 5, where a more in-depth analysis on issues of gender in resource extraction will be taken up. Specifically, attention will be focused on how female participants reject, reconcile, and reinforce gender stereotypes informed by discourses of hegemonic masculinities and neoliberal capitalism regarding LDLC and working in male-dominated resources extraction industries.

4.4.1 Gender and the Resource Extraction Work Culture

The work culture in Alberta’s resource extraction industry has been defined mainly through historical associations of frontier masculinities, cowboy hero stereotypes and economic prosperity (Dorow & O’Shaughnessy, 2013; O’Shaughnessy, 2011; Miller, 2004; Reed, 2003). These associations have been produced by, and subsequently work to reinforce, male-domination through historical connections linking masculinity with global capitalist economies (Gahman, 2014; Connell, 1995). The association made between masculinity and capitalism have pervaded since at least the 18th and 19th centuries, and have been addressed by a variety of scholars, from political analysts such as Karl Marx (Capital Vol. I) and Frederick Engels (The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State) to literary critics such as Shaw (2014) in Norman Mailer’s an American Dream (1965) (Hartigan-O’Connor, 2016). The implementation of neoliberal policies and practices has also fortified male-dominance in the resource sector, along with the gendered division of labour (Fraser, Mannani & Stefanick, 2015; Dorow, 2015). Policies and practices such as precarious labour, “devolution of social responsibility onto families and local communities”, to name a few (Dorow, 2015, p.278). While the number of female workers in Canada’s resource extraction industries has been increasing since the 1970s
(analogous with broader trends of women and labour) (Statistics Canada, 2017g), the ratio gap between male and female workers in resource extraction continues to exist, with women dominating the service sectors (Statistics Canada, 2017h). For instance, in 2011, workers in trades, transport, equipment operations, and related occupations made up nearly one-third of the RMWB’s labour force, with 11,675 out of 13,005 of these workers being men (Statistics Canada, 2013b). The continued male dominance in Canada’s resource extraction industry reinforces cultures of patriarchy (Fraser, Mannani & Stefanick, 2015), and hegemonic masculinities (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011) that are shaped temporally and spatially, privileging male workers. Hegemonic masculinities can be defined as “the configuration of gender practices, which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Gender modalities, along with modalities of femininity and masculinity, are produced through structural practices that place gender in dialectic opposition such that associations of femininity are determined and evaluated in contrast to associations of masculinity (and vice versa). Hegemonic masculinities position those traits associated with femininity as being other, lesser and subordinate. Thus, hegemonic masculinities and male-dominance can create a culture of male privilege that simultaneously creates certain barriers for female workers — barriers that stem mainly from stereotypes imposed onto female workers both inside and outside the resource extraction industry. Actually, hegemonic masculinities can create barriers for anyone who is not considered an able-bodied, non-indigenous, heterosexual, white, male, and born in Canada.
4.4.2 Barriers in Resource Extraction: Discourse on Gender and Success

To begin the investigation into any potential barriers that female mobile workers experience, participants were asked whether they thought there were any existing stereotypes about female mobile workers in resource extraction, distinct from resource extraction workers generally, and from mobile workers to other workplaces. Four of the women indicated “yes”, two indicated “I don’t know”, and the remaining three indicated “no”. Participants who answered “yes” were asked to list and rank from their personal opinion/experience the top three existing stereotypes about female LDLC workers in resource extraction. Josephine listed: (1) “large women that are loud”, (2) “smokers”, and (3) “drinkers” as her three. Alexandra listed: (1) “They [female workers] cannot do the job - physically, mentally or by skill set (you have to always prove yourself at a new site, no matter your credentials or experience)” (2) “They will become a problem in the male work force (harassment). It is best if you have a sense of humor and relaxed disposition” and (3) “Ostracized and ignored (until they get to know you and your personality) or sexually harassed (you must be able to politely deflect unwanted advances etc.)”. Caitriona indicated the following three in her list: (1) “work ethic”, (2) “use their body to get promoted”, and (3) “not good enough”. Tiffany listed, (1) “Most females do not last long in the industry” (2) “Females only work in the oil industry for male attention” and (3) “Most females cannot handle the demanding lifestyle physically and emotionally”.

The stereotypes identified by the participants may be subsumed under three main categories. The first category concerns female workers’ competency. The second category includes various ways women are sexualized, whether it is through “how they use their bodies”, or are “working for male attention”, or experiences of harassment. Finally, the third category
involves the appearance of female workers. These categories are consistent with findings from previous research on female resource extractions workers (Miller, 2004).

Participants were also asked whether they had personally experienced, or knew someone personally who had experienced sexual harassment, or discrimination. Five women indicated, “yes”, while three indicated “no”, and one did not answer. While some published research suggests that women experience little to no harassment or discrimination (Costa et al., 2006), clearly some women do experience sexual harassment and/or discrimination based on gender in the resource extraction sector. A deeper analysis on how the women experienced harassment or discrimination follows in chapter 5. In an effort to understand the women’s experiences with sexual harassment and discrimination more fully, they were also asked to indicate (1) whether they, or someone they knew (a female worker) received a promotion, and (2) whether they think women and men have the same opportunities with respect to employment and career advancement within their field in resource extraction. Concerning the question about promotion, all but one woman responded that they or another female worker they know had received a promotion or work advancement. The range of responses in terms of how many women they knew who received a promotion ranged from one to “more than 5”. It is not discernable whether the high levels of promotion are related to federal initiatives aimed at hiring and retaining more female workers in fields of science, technology, math, and engineering, and more specific aims at attracting and retaining more female workers into trades and work in resource extraction, and more general improvement in attitudes and acceptance regarding female workers.

Regarding perceptions of having equal opportunities as their male colleagues with respect to employment and career advancement, three women indicated “no”, four indicated “yes”, one indicated, “I don’t know”, and one did not respond. This finding appears to be equivocal and
inconclusive. As a follow-up question, participants who indicated that female workers’ opportunities are diminished in comparison to male workers were asked why they think that there are not the same opportunities available to male and female workers in their field. The three women who indicated “no” elaborated on their responses: “Most Women Work Administrative Duties. There Is No Promotion” (caps in original text) (Lynn).

In 2012, I Did a Quick Excel Project And Realized There Were Approximately 52 Men to Every Women. A Good Portion Of The Men Are There Via Friends And Family. Women Are There Through Skills And Perseverance. Therefore, Men That Are Part Of “The Old Boys Club” Are Offered The Choice Opportunities And Higher Wage [sic] (Josephine).

“The type of work I do, there really is no place to go. It is a static position. Most document controllers from my experience are female. So, the opportunities are simply limited regardless of gender.” (Nicole).

These responses suggest that there are no opportunities for promotion for those in administrative positions, and, as Nicole specifies, this is the case “regardless of gender”. However, female workers continue to be overrepresented in administrative positions, which is referenced by Nicole when she states, “Most document controllers from my experience are female”, reinforcing the typical gendered division of labour (Ranson, 2009). One may wonder whether opportunities for promotion would continue not to exist if male workers predominated in administrative roles.

Participants were asked what advice they would give to future female workers entering, or thinking about entering, resource extraction work. In response, female participants had a wide range of advice. The responses included references to particular personality traits and behaviors. For instance, one woman said it was important to have “Strong skills in your field, self-esteem and high morals, ability to remain a lady, as in don’t use profanity, and don’t bed hop in camp” (Josephine). This comment confronts discourses of femininity, addressing what successful women “ought” to be like, which is a lady. Having high morals, refraining from using profanity,
and refraining from “bed hopping” constitute being a lady. The emphasis on having high self-esteem and strong skills could be interpreted as ways to fight negative stereotypes of female workers, and are also typically attributed to notions of masculinity. Anna wrote, “You need to be adaptable to the environment and comfortable working and living with mostly men”. This comment speaks pragmatically about the realities of a long-distance commuting lifestyle in resource extraction, while acknowledging the male dominance of the industry. Lynn’s advice had a more cautionary tone: “Long hours—12-hour work day, camp life is tough, and it gets lonely”. Like Anna, Lynn focused on the realities of working in resource extraction. Both women focused on delivering a warning about the difficulties of this type of work situation, to ensure that future female workers know what they are signing up for. In other words, they have accepted the reality of what it is to work in resource extraction and perhaps view success in the industry as knowing what to expect and then finding a way to adapt. Nicole’s advice mirrored that of Josephine:

Dress appropriately, as it is a male-dominated industry and the objectification is huge, so not to draw any further unwanted attention to yourself. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals. Refrain from engaging in relationships or sexual activity as most people are married and lead a double life. Further, the talk and judgements are huge and can lead to jeopardy in your employment. Have a hobby or interest to keep you busy after the work day is over as it can be a very lonely place. (Nicole).

Much like Josephine, Nicole articulated the importance of having high morals, which is captured by reference to how women “should” dress and the types of activities they should refrain from to avoid drawing unwanted male attention. Imbued in these comments is the idea that women solicit certain attention based on how they dress or act. Also, the emphasis for female workers not to “engage in relationships or sexual activity” such as “bed hopping”, reinforces notions of slut-shaming based on a double standard regarding sexuality and gender. Nicole acknowledged the ways in which the act of slut-shaming is executed—being gossiped about, judged, and ultimately risking employment. The advice offered by participants also aligns with the key
themes in the stereotypes about female resource extraction workers, such as emphasis on appearance, competence and the sexualization of females.

4.4.3 Mother, Wife, and Career Women

Previous studies have consistently indicated strong barriers or challenges in combining motherhood and work in resource extraction (Costa et al., 2006; Ranson, 2005; Miller, 2004). These barriers stem from a general lack of family-friendly policies both at corporate and government levels. Family-friendly policies are either low in priority for resource-based companies (Ranson, 2005), insufficient, or antithetical to broader neoliberal policies that have been structurally and systematically enforced (Dorow, 2015; Fraser, Mannani & Stefanick, 2015). For instance, the lack of affordable childcare available in the RMWB as Dorow (2015) points out is a consequence of an overall allocation of social responsibilities onto families and local communities, which is characteristic of neoliberal principles. This consequently works to restrict opportunities for women in resource extraction, especially those of childbearing and childrearing age. Family-friendly polices need to be introduced with simultaneous critiques of social structures and discourses on what makes a “fit” or “good” mom (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), thereby resolving existing tensions regarding motherhood and being a “good” professional. These tensions were observed in Holdaway and Parker’s (1998) study on female police officers.

The participants were asked to rate the extent to which they felt motherhood was a barrier to working in resource extraction. Three women rated the view of motherhood as a barrier as “very much” accurate. Four rated motherhood as a barrier as “quite a bit” accurate. One participant rated it as “not at all” accurate, and the remaining participant did not respond.
Therefore, seven of the nine women agreed that the view of motherhood as a barrier for working in resource extraction is accurate (further discussed in chapter 5).

Two of the participants, Anna and Josephine, are mothers, with children who are over the age of 18. Only Anna worked in resource extraction while her child was under 18. She described how her parents’ support allowed her to work away as a single mother: “As a single parent myself, my parents helped me out quite a bit when it came to sitting and things like that, so, you know, there's times I'd work when that is all I did was work”. Anna’s experience illustrates the importance of having social and instrumental support from family and social networks in order to be able to work away and commute long distance as a mother with young children.

When the participants were asked to list the top three workplace and commuting barriers they experienced, in order of importance, several wrote that having a family, children and spouse was their primary barrier. Anna wrote, “single moms requiring child care for young children” as her first barrier, Josephine wrote, “females with husbands and children”, and Nicole wrote simply, “child care” as her first barrier. Caitriona and Amanda also listed family or “being away from families” as being the top barrier. Being away from family extends the traditional notion of women’s roles, feminizing family responsibilities and caretaker roles. In second place, Amanda wrote “motherhood”, and Tiffany wrote “family or sole-caretaker of young children” in third place. These responses confirm the finding from previous studies that motherhood is a barrier for women working away in resource extraction. Anna’s experience of working while a single mother of a young child, with the assistance of her parents, speaks directly to the need for childcare to allow women to work as a long-distance commuter, or in resource extraction. This lack of family support is evident also more broadly with families living in the RMWB. For instance, Dorow’s (2015) study, indicates that the availability and affordability of childcare is
quite low, putting too much of a financial burden on families. The results can be a flexibilization of women’s work and/or women opting to leave work and let their partner continue to work. In the case of single mothers, these options simply do not exist and consequently their option to work in resource extraction, whether long-distance commuting or not, is limited or simply not an option. For women planning on having families, resource extraction may be only a short-term opportunity. Participants in this study discussed the reality of having relationships and families as being a definite challenge while engaging in long-distance commuting and working in resource extraction industry.

The other barriers that participants listed referred to dealing with the challenges of the work. For instance: “lack of self-esteem to work in a male-dominated environment” (Amanda), and “confidence, and limited resources for workplace readiness” (Tiffany) were in the top position. Both of these comments touch on issues brought up previously. The importance of having confidence also relates to what Tiffany wrote as her second barrier, “fair amount of harassment of all kinds”, and also what Anna wrote as her third barrier: “stigma from old stereotypes that working in remote areas is for men only”. These comments stress how important it is for female long distance labour commuters to be resilient and confident. While these characteristics may also be necessary for male workers, the impetus in their case would not result from having to fit into a male-dominated world.

Nicole wrote disability and [the lack of] opportunities as her second and third barrier. Nicole’s comment recognizes the intersectionality between being a female and having a disability, and touches on diminished opportunities.

Overall, most women listed motherhood and families/having a partner as being the primary barrier for female LDLC workers. They listed other barriers that are consistent with
previous findings in this and other studies related to lack of opportunities, issues of harassment and the need for confidence. The participants articulated identities of great strength, resilience and perseverance in order to fit into the male-dominated world of resource extraction. This identity is shaped through various traits that either conform to the male-dominated social culture, or are associated with traditional hegemonic masculinity.

4.5 Summary

This chapter began describing the study sample, their entry into resource extraction, and push/pull forces regarding the two study locations. The chapter answered the first research question regarding the major factors affecting the workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to Alberta’s resource extractive job projects.

The survey data showed that financial reasons, including high cost of living and lack of competitive wages were the reasons for working outside of Kelowna. Proximity to social networks, a temperate climate, and overall pleasant lifestyle were among the main pull forces for Kelowna indicated by participants. Participants also identified their top three barriers and gendered stereotypes on female mobile workers and resource extraction workers. Both barriers and gendered stereotypes fall into three broad categories relating to female workers’ appearance and behaviour, competence and the sexualization of females more generally.

The findings from this chapter identified important themes that will be discussed further in the next chapter, to answer the second and third research questions. These included how motherhood or family involvement is a barrier for female workers, and tensions between gender and resource extraction work through values of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinities.
Chapter 5: Material and Discursive Practices: Gender, Neoliberalism and Hegemonic Masculinities

5.1 Overview

The interview approach was semi-structured and used open-ended questions to delve deeper into the issues raised by the survey results; it also allowed participants to raise topics they felt were relevant to their experience. The goal of utilizing this interviewing approach was to allow participants to have their voices heard, as well as to minimize, as much as possible, the influence of the researcher. All interviews were initiated with the question, “Please describe for me a typical day in your life when you are long-distance commuting and working in resource extraction?” The purpose of starting with this question was to allow participants to consciously walk through a typical day, prompting and orienting them to think carefully about their experiences. This was especially important in cases where participants no longer worked in resource extraction or no longer engaged in long-distance commuting, or both. Some of the participants were laid off as a result of the 2014 oil industry downturn in Alberta and were therefore no longer working in the oil sands/resource extraction industry.

Out of the nine participants who participated in the survey, five agreed to participate in a follow-up interview reflecting a range of the survey participants. The five original participants who participated in the survey are: Josephine, Lynn, Nicole, Caitriona, and Amanda.

This chapter will unfold in 3 sections, beginning with an introduction to concepts guiding this discussion and analysis. The second section analyzes the gender evaluations of participants on characteristics linked to success in long-distance commuting work in resource extraction, through discourses of neoliberalism. The third section analyzes discursive practices used by participants when talking about these evaluations in terms of how they, reject, reinforce, and/or
reconcile existing tensions of gender and work in resource extraction. The chapter will conclude leading into the discussion of corporate and government policy recommendations taken up in chapter 6.

5.2 Introduction of Key Concepts for Analysis of Qualitative Interviews

Two analytic concepts guide this analysis. The first of these is hegemonic masculinities (discussed previously). The second concept is neoliberalism. Linked to neoliberalism are two further concepts that will be discussed briefly (1) precariousness of labour, (2) neoliberal individualism.

5.2.1 Hegemonic Masculinities and Alberta’s Resource Extraction Industry

The landscape of Alberta’s resource extraction industry has been shaped and defined by pervasive male dominance since its very inception. The consequence of this is delineated by taken-for-granted norms of hegemonic masculinities (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011; O’Shaughnessy, 2011). Hegemonic masculinities are distinguishable from other, competing forms of masculinities, which are positioned relative to, and subordinated by, valorized hegemonic forms (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinities “ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832), thereby affecting the position and re-presentation of women (Gonzalez & Seidler, 2008). Instances of this are revealed through systemic and social structures that permeate and operate within Alberta’s resource extraction industries, and work to reinforce hegemonic masculinities and privilege male over female workers. Some examples of this are evident in the lack of family-friendly policies, the continued male dominance in the worker gender ratio, the gendered
division of labour that keeps women in ‘feminized’ sectors of the industry\(^\text{16}\), and the underlying sexist practices and assumptions that inform these outcomes (Dorow, 2015; Angel, 2014; Dorow & O’Shaughnessy, 2013; O’Shaughnessy, 2011; Ranson, 2009; 2005).

5.2.2 Discourses of Neoliberalism on Gender and Resource Extraction

Examining neoliberalism within the context of resource extraction work in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, and other “resource frontiers” (O’Shaughnessy & Dorow, 2013) is important “because these are sites where the political and economic tensions of capitalism manifest in exceptionally vivid and observable forms” (Young & Mathews, 2007 in O’Shaughnessy & Dorow, 2013, p. 129). Thereby, inviting such investigations to take place.

Neoliberalism inherently affects the work experiences of mobile workers in resource extraction. Defining neoliberalism is no easy task, and has been a source of contention among scholars. Neoliberalism can take on policy, economic, social, organizational/institutional, and theoretical conceptualizations informed by variety epistemologies, paradigmatic underpinnings, ideologies, and schools of thought\(^\text{17}\), which can be further broken down into varied hybrid forms (Springer, 2012; Peck, 2004). However, for the purpose of this thesis, neoliberalism (distinct from neoliberalization, defined later) refers broadly to a set of policies constituted on, and enforcing unfettered market centrisim, laissez-faire economics, pro-globalization, increased privatization, deregulation, and subsequently precarious employment, work intensification, and high levels of

\(^\text{16}\) Feminized sectors referring to those sectors that are associated with work typically conducted in the private sphere of the home (usually unpaid), and tend to be associated with caregiving and the social reproduction of labour (Dorow, 2015; Dorow, Cassiano, & Doerksen, 2015; Ranson, 2009; Brown, 2004).

\(^\text{17}\) For example, those who are influenced by a Foucauldian school of thinking and therefore emphasize governmentality, or by Marxism and emphasize hegemonic ideology, or by poststructural and critical epistemologies emphasizing discursive production and neoliberalization (Springer, 2012).
competition enhanced through increased modes of individualism (Herod & Lambert, 2016; Brown, 2015; Evans, 2015; Vosko, Campbell, & MacDonald, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Chomsky, 1999). In this way, neoliberalism affects hiring practices of workers, layoffs, wages, and labour conditions (Duménil & Lévy, 2004). The impacts of these neoliberal traits have differential outcomes for workers depending on their individual subjectivities and how they are situated relative to others as a result of their subjectivities. More directly, one outcome of neoliberal capitalism is that “contemporary society is set upon a form of institutionalized individualism, whereby institutions, employment structures and basic civil, political and social rights are geared to the individual rather than the group”, even at the expense of the group (Phipps, 2014, p. 13; Herod & Lambert, 2016; Brown, 2015; Evans, 2015; Banet-Weiser, 2015; Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Vosko & Clark, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Chomsky, 1999). Consequential to this is an inherent assumption that the procurement of success is solely the outcome of an individual’s level of hard work. Additionally, that “failure” is solely the result of an individual’s shortcoming, or failure to work hard (Burchell, 1993; Rose, 1992). This way of thinking eliminates any potential responsibility that may be constituted at the organizational, or government level, or operating within existing systemic structures that privilege some workers/individuals over others, such that individuals already facing barriers through marginalization based on their ethnicity, gender, race, SES, mother tongue, nationality, ability, mental health, sexual orientation, and so on, are left further in the margins and at a competitive disadvantage (Braedley & Luxton, 2010). To quote Braedley and Luxton (Braedley & Luxton 2010, p 8), “Human rights and equality under neoliberalism are the rights and equality to compete, but not the right to start from the same starting line, with the same equipment, or at the sound of the same gun”. These elements play an important role
alongside impacts of hegemonic masculinities in affecting the experiences of female mobile workers in important ways in Alberta’s resource extraction industry.

It is important to note that the focus on neoliberalism in this thesis is framed within a poststructural framework. Thus, the previous conversation regarding the complexity of defining neoliberalism becomes a key consideration. From a poststructural perspective, it is not simply enough to talk about neoliberalism in broad terms. Rather, it is important to recognize the non-monolithic and ubiquitous elements determining the (re)production of neoliberal values through various social agents, which can be understood as neoliberalization (Springer, 2012). This linguistic shift to neoliberalization acknowledges the “multiplicity, complexity, variegation, and contextual specificity” (Springer, 2012, p.135) involved in how neoliberalism is (re)produced that takes into account “the role that ‘the social’ and individual agency play in (re)producing, facilitating, and circulating neoliberalism” (Springer, 2012, p. 135; Springer, 2010; Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010; Purcell & Purcell, 2008; Ward & England, 2007; Heynen & Robbins, 2005). Thus, neoliberalism, or neoliberalization, is understood as being something that is culturally produced, or co-produced, through social interactions between various social agents, repeated through processes both material and discursive (and can themselves become material and discursive), and contingent on spatial and temporal contexts (England & Ward, 2016; Kingfisher, 2013; Springer, 2012; Larner, 2003; 2000). In other words, neoliberal values, or traits are reinforced through processes of performativity that can either be repeated or rejected by social actors (Butler, 1997; 1993; 1990). Materially, neoliberal values are produced in terms of existing social structures and polices, etc., which are reinforced through the promotion of these existing structures, policies, etc. Discursively, neoliberalism is produced in terms of the
“production and reproduction of individual subject positions, ideologies, stereotypes, cultural beliefs and other forms of negotiated meanings” (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011, p.137-138).

In light of this theoretical context, the interview data are analyzed to show how neoliberal discourses are (re)produced by the study participants, and how these discourses influence the study participants, as revealed in their evaluations and constructions of the experiences, meanings, and explorations being a female mobile worker in Alberta’s resource extraction industries, and the successes and challenges they face. In addition, an analysis will be conducted on evaluations of power as relational and oppressive (Prince & Dufty, 2009), through reinforcing practices influenced by norms of hegemonic masculinities. It is important to include ideologies of neoliberalism into investigations of the experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to resource extraction work sites due to the relationship neoliberalism has to labour, resource extraction industries, and transnational corporations such as many oil companies.

It is also necessary to acknowledge the importance and necessity of research investigating the impacts of neoliberalism (neoliberalization) and hegemonic masculinities on intersectionalities of workers’ gendered subjectivity with other aspects of an individual’s existing subjectivities (England & Ward, 2016), such as race (Crenshaw, 1989), for example, looking at the experiences of indigenous, or “visible” or racialized minorities in resource extraction. This level of investigation is severely lacking in academic research. However, due to challenges with recruitment and a subsequent lack of diversity represented in the participant population, this level of investigation cannot be conducted with the study data.

5.2.3 Linking Hegemonic Masculinities and Neoliberalism

The purpose of defining the above concepts is to clarify the conceptual framework guiding this analysis and to contextualize how each theoretical element plays a role in affecting
the experiences of female mobile workers in resource extraction through discursive production. Neoliberalism is one development of capitalism, viewed by some as an intensified version of capitalism, or capitalism on its head (Brown, 2015; Harvey, 2005; Chomsky, 1999). The connection between capitalism and neoliberalism is important when looking at gender and hegemonic masculinities. Analysts have made direct connections linking masculinity with global capitalist economies (Gahman, 2014; Shaw, 2014; Anderson, 1997; Connell, 1995) within a variety of contexts (See Chapter 4) as well as with neoliberalism (Lindisfarne & Neale, 2016). The link in this case is articulated in terms of how capitalism has reinforced a hegemonic, gendered division of labour, and the subsequent domestication of females (Anderson, 1997). Therefore, it is especially important to acknowledge and deconstruct the influence of these on participants’ experiences in a male-dominated world through the analytical framework defined above, specifically, how participants discursively (re)produce principals of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinities when talking about their experiences.

What follows next is a discussion of participant evaluations of their experiences as it relates to neoliberal discourses that are tied to masculinized forms of productivity and work ethic, reinforced through practices of hegemonic norms.

5.3 Evaluations on Gender in Resource Extraction through Neoliberal Discourses

As discussed in chapter 4, some thematic categories were illuminated by participants’ questionnaire responses, which repeatedly made reference to issues concerning four broad categories. The four categories relate to aspects of female workers’ appearance, personality traits, competency and work ethic, as well as experiences related to the sexualization of female workers, or females more generally. These identified categories relate to factors that either promote female workers’ success and acceptance into resource extraction or create barriers for
them. These factors also help to explain how women cope with the barriers in terms of whether they reject, reconcile, and/or reinforce gender stereotypes. An understanding of the barriers will also help identify what corporate and other recommendations can be implemented to improve female workers’ overall experiences.

Starting off the discussion is an analysis of participant evaluations of how female workers are perceived, and their experiences in relation to stereotypes of female workers’ knowledge, competency and work ethic in resource extraction. These evaluations will be analyzed through the lens of neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinities, and how these influence the participants’ views. An analysis on evaluations from participants’ perceptions on preferred personality traits and motherhood, linked with the overall sexualization of female workers, follows.

5.3.1 Neoliberal Discourses of Individualism on Success, Gender and Work in a Male-Dominated World

Capitalist discourses promoting a strong work ethic and prolific worker capacity and productivity have become a dominant and intrinsic part of institutions and industry more broadly, including resource extraction, and through much of the overall work culture in the Western World (Harvey, 2005) and are strongly tied to discourses of masculinity (Schippers, 2007). These discourses are pervasive enough that they have become part of colloquial speech, for instance, when individuals speak about “being on a work grind”, “being a cog in the mechanism”, or generally about having a “productive day”. These discourses are further linked to other discourses that work to fortify the overall impact of the former. An example is the discourse of the American Dream, summarized as the notion that “if you work hard enough, you will succeed” (success in this case is articulated as something quantifiable, tangible, and monetary). Discourses stemming from neoliberalism that promote values of individual growth,
self-advancement, self-reliance, self-interest, and responsible decision-making have also become widespread, particularly since the financial crisis of 2008 (Evans, 2015). These discourses promote ideas of workers as entrepreneurial subjects, and reinforce a sense that individuals’ success and failures are contingent on their ability to work hard and maintain a competitive edge (Brown, 2006; 2004). While the repercussions of these discourses have been the topic of discussion in studies looking at a diverse range of occupations (Butz, & Berg, 2002; Connell, & Messerschmidt, 2005; Pacholok, 2009; Nunn, 2013) such as in the case of musicians (Scharff, 2016), hospice workers (Brown, 2004), and academics (Berg, Gahman, & Nunn, 2014; Meyers, 2013; Dyck, 2005; Berg, 2002; Kobayashi, 2002; Yasmeen, 2002), to name a few, the ways in which their impacts manifest can vary, particularly when individual subjectivities regarding one’s SES, race, ethnicity, immigrant status, mother tongue, religion, sexual orientation, ability, mental health, gender, nationality, etc. enter into the equation. The impacts of these various subjectivities of an individual can have broad consequences, effecting both access to opportunities and subsequent successes. The intersection of multiple subjectivities of a single individual can create plural and interconnected challenges for that individual (Evans, 2015), for example, an aboriginal female worker in resource extraction. For female mobile workers working in Alberta’s male-dominated resource extraction industry, gender subjectivity interacts with existing neoliberal discourses that are tied to hegemonic masculinities in ways that marginalize female workers. Female workers experience marginalization in more implicit versus explicit ways despite positive shifts in overall attitudes regarding women working in resource extraction.

Throughout the interviews considerable emphasis was placed on the importance for workers to have a strong work ethic, and on overall productivity for gaining and maintaining
success. Measures taken to promote and maintain these traits in workers are conducted through the promotion of values stemming from neoliberal individualism, as well as through continued precarious employment. Simultaneously, participants discussed experiences regarding having to consistently prove their level of competence and knowledge. This reality is a direct by-product of high levels of competition among workers to gain renewed contracts, and existing labour insecurities both in the Okanagan and the oil sands. The precedence given to discourses of having a strong work ethic and on having to prove personal competence spanned a range of topics and issues addressed throughout the duration of the interviews. This is taken up next.

Within the first few minutes of Lynn’s (administration) interview she mentions the word “work” 10 times. This preoccupation was evident throughout a variety of her answers on an array of questions throughout her interview. For instance, when asked about whether she felt a sense of community in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, she answered,

No! It’s strictly you’re there to work. There are people from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, all over Canada, and they’re there to work and, um, you don’t often see them because they might be on different shifts than you, or whatever, so you really, you go in to work. You work 12 hours, and you go back to camp, and most of the time you’re too tired to even eat, so you go to bed. And so, it’s not like a feeling of…it’s not a community, it’s a work, a work environment. (Lynn).

In this passage alone, Lynn mentions “work” six times within the context of describing the work environment in Alberta’s resource extraction industry vis-a-vis any sense of community. She alludes to the pervasiveness of individualism through an isolation, promoted by rotating/different shifts and through long hours. Individualism is linked directly in this way to the overall work environment/culture, while sense of community is diminished. Individualism, a hallmark of neoliberalism (Phipps, 2014, p. 13; Herod & Lambert; 2016; Brown, 2015; Evans; 2015; Banet-Weiser, 2014; Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Vosko & Clark, 2009; Harvey, 2005; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Chomsky, 1999), is articulated through the rigorous work schedules and
simultaneous lack of community, as evident from Lynn’s comments, “You don’t often see them” in reference to her colleagues. Also, Lynn concludes with an emphasis on how community and work are intrinsically unrelated: “it’s not like a feeling of…it’s not a community, it’s work”. Josephine also discussed the importance of “just working” as a consequence of the rigorous working schedule:

You would just get enough time to shower, throw something on…half the time you didn't even want something to eat because you were so exhausted…go to bed, and get up again, and do it again. (Josephine).

Nicole on the other hand spoke of feeling a sense of community marked by the unique circumstances of living in camp with colleagues. However, she simultaneously emphasized the pervasiveness of loneliness among workers:

I've worked in B.C., I worked in all this sort of stuff, and I still have the closest of friends, like, from all over Canada and, um, the States, and all over the place, because you just work with a diverse group of people. So yeah, I mean you…there is a real sense of community…but there's also too…. It's not unlike like any other, you know, social situation, where you get, you know, like cliques, and sort of, you know, various bullying, there's all kind of nonsense and that sort of stuff. But, for the most part, no, people who've worked together, generally work together and…there's lots of…. I mean, as much as you're busy and stuff, there's time to laugh, and carry on and be foolish, and you know that sort of thing, so, yeah, it really can be the best times or it can be the worst times. It just depends on how you and most of the people that are there…. This would not be the first time that they've done this, so they know the drill. They're totally comfortable with the way things roll. It's kind of the new people that are like sometimes, you know…it's not for everyone. I mean, I've had to send people home in a couple of days because they were, um, suicidal. I've had to send people home because they just…they were so lonely that they just…. They've never been away from their family, and so it's not for everybody. (Nicole).

The need for a sense of community is especially strong due to workers having to fill the space of their home social networks with colleagues within their work community. However, this is not always possible with the long work hours, and is particularly hard for new workers—suggesting that over time workers assimilate to the work culture. Lynn echoed the limited time for
socializing and resulting loneliness when she expressed the advice she would give to women thinking about working in resource extraction and mobile commuting:

Well, it does get lonely because you’re up there for 14 days in a row. Sometimes you get long shifts, so they’re more [even longer] than that. So, when you’re at camp, like I say, you’re there mostly to sleep…. When you’re at work, you’re doing a 12-hour workday, and it’s head down into a computer and that’s it. So, you don’t really have a lot of time to…. There’s not a lot of socializing, really…. you know, you make friends up there, your work friends. But yeah, I find, I found that you get lonely. You’re away from your family and your friends for two weeks at a time. (Lynn).

In this passage, discourses of productivity marked by, “it’s head down into a computer and that’s it”, and individualism as per “it does get lonely” and “there’s not a lot of socializing really” are simultaneously present. She linked the existence of loneliness as a direct consequence of the intense work schedule, giving a suggestion that a strong work ethic and productivity are accomplished exclusively through increased modes of individualism. These modes of individualism can generate high levels of competition among workers due to efforts to enhance overall levels of productivity. Alternatively, stronger social relationships between workers may inhibit the competitive climate in the workplace. This is represented in Josephine’s comments when talking about the importance of having good self-esteem:

Well for me, self-esteem was…like on a couple jobs where there was so much bullying and back-biting I found that I really had to work at it to tell myself, ‘Yes, you do know how to do your job, you are an adult, and you have to just ignore this nonsense going on here.’ So, that's tough. And the very first job I went on, I thought, I don't think I can do this because there was so much back-biting and, you know, the same thing. I thought, clearly, this is how these camps run, and nobody seems to care. They just turn a blind eye to it. You don't know who to trust. Yeah, but you…I mean, you can't be totally crazy, there's obviously some people there who are on your wave length, and they're not into all that nonsense. So, you do make friends, and it might be in another office or something, but some of it, it's pretty tough, and especially for the younger women…. Like I said, I have had 25 years experience in [intentionally left out to maintain confidentiality]. So, I dealt with a lot of this nonsense myself, but you just sit there and you just think, Oh, what is the point of this? [laughing] You are an adult. Yes, we're all here for the same reason, we're not here to earn brownie points, we're here to earn a good wage. Yeah, and the strange part is that usually that I found the women who are usually bullies. They are really very clever, but they do not want to share their knowledge with you. They just
want to make your life miserable so they can go run and tell somebody, Hey, she doesn't know what she is doing, instead of teaching you, which is actually their job, it's just craziness. (Josephine)

When asked about the competitive nature of the industry, she confirmed this: “Oh [it’s] very competitive, yeah.” Josephine’s comments regarding women being the worst perpetrators of bullying and about hoarding their knowledge provides evidence of competitive self-interest and increased individualism to maintain a competitive edge over colleagues. In addition, it provides evidence regarding the reality that female workers have to work harder to prove their competence and knowledge. The pressure to maintain a competitive edge over female colleagues, who are positioned as direct competition, has particular pertinence. Females’ minority status, in terms of the gender ratio, positions them as being among some of the most vulnerable for losing their position. Efforts to enhance personal skills and assets over other workers, reimagines workers as commodities themselves. This is also a prominent feature of neoliberalism, which orients workers as commodities framed as entrepreneurial subjects (Brown, 2006; 2003). While elements of enhanced productivity and having a high skill-set is not altogether a negative, it is the modes in which these are accomplished that have negative outcomes for workers’ overall quality of life and feelings of community. These competitive actions performed by female workers reiterate neoliberal values and continuously reinforce existing barriers. In this case barriers regarding developing trusting interpersonal relationships between workers, opportunities to learn and advance in the field through help seeking, instances of isolation, and bullying. The existing systemic and social structures that maintain women’s minority status in resource extraction produce an environment where women “turn on each other”, which in turn reinforce stereotypes of women as being “catty” or “bitchy”, evidenced in
Amanda’s comments, “I find working with guys much easier than women. Just because, like, women can get catty, and bitchy.”

Individualism and overall feelings of loneliness exist in spite of the close nature of the worker experience.

You have to recognize that you are not just working with these people…you’re eating with these people, you are with these people more than you are going to be with your family. So, you eat with them, sometimes you exercise with them, you socialize with them and you work with them 12 hours a day…but there really is…. I mean, because people are typically lonely right. I mean they're away from their families…it can be a very, like, it can be a very lonely place for a lot of people. (Nicole)

Caitriona referenced isolation as a major barrier for workers:

Cause I, some people were saying the isolation is the hardest thing, but I'm thinking that that's sort of…. Depending on your personality…if you're an isolator, then, that's going to be the thing that holds you back. (Caitriona)

While feelings of loneliness are not unique to female workers, instances of feeling isolated may be enhanced through an overall lack of sense of belonging. Social ties may be diminished for female workers due to their minority status, through a process of othering when working in a male-dominated world. Nicole spoke about processes of othering while discussing ways in which female workers can experience objectification. For instance,

When you're working in an…well, I was in a camp once where there was 10,000 people, so 10,000 people, and you got to think that probably 9,500 of them were men…it can be just extremely creepy. Actually, I just had this conversation with my girlfriend the other day, and she was talking about, you know, how her boyfriend was like…all these guys are looking at…this was in camp, all these guys are looking [at her] and she doesn't even notice. Because you have to either…you just have to turn it off, or it would just drive you…it would just make you crazy cause, like, yeah, it's just like you walk down the hallway and it's just like being, you know, on display…. I would say probably the dining halls or just in the hallways is the worst place for any kind of objectification and walking down the hallway. Like there's been times where I walked down the hallway and I've just felt like I just wanted to [be] physically sick, yeah, or stop in the hallway and talk to someone and see the men how they, they, they just about break their necks looking at women. You know, it's just like, it sounds exaggerated, but it's really, it's really the truth! It is…and I mean, if you don't have…and I've worked with women where they just like,
they just go to work, they do their job they might have dinner with somebody and they literally run to their rooms and hide out. (Nicole).

The male dominant culture marked by an overall sexualization of female workers reinforces a sense that female workers are an oddity, which has many consequences in terms of fostering a sense of belonging. This sense of being an oddity is inherent in discussions about uniforms and the height of shelves, for example, in camps. When talking about the availability of services Josephine said, “But there's very little there for females. It really is geared towards men”, or about the height of shelves, “It's the same thing, [I] couldn't reach it either. That I found to be really annoying, and I asked a couple times, ‘Can you not put something lower?’ [in an irritated voice]. ‘No’ [the response].” Another example related to the acceptable work attire for female workers, as described by Nicole, “I've had superintendents say, "that's why we don't hire women.". Yes, because it's like too much of a distraction and this is what goes on and we are always like hey, hey like we’re in turtle necks and [in audible] but don't be painting everyone with the same brush.” These subtle daily experiences symbolize how the work environment is gendered in ways that privilege men and represent women as “oddities”, or as problematic. This finding is similar to that of Wright (2016) on female construction workers. Female workers likely seem to isolate themselves more than male workers due to awareness of their minority status, such as when Nicole described how female workers in some cases “they just go to work, they do their job”, and while “they might have dinner with somebody”, they then feel as though they have to “literally run to their rooms and hide out”. Instances of isolation are also evident in Amanda’s example, of eating lunch by herself because the ongoing conversations about women by other workers became too uncomfortable.

I think even though I generally get along with guys better, like, at that time, I was the only female in our lunch trailer, and nobody ever really said anything that was overly
offensive, or whatever…. Like, I don't really takes things personally, and I know, a lot of times when they do say something stupid, they're joking, like, it's nothing like serious, but, I don't know, I guess, just like listening to them…talking about like women, or like their girlfriends at home…or, like, I don't know, it was a bunch of stuff like that, I'm just like...[facial expression of irritation], I think for a few days I’ll eat my lunch in peace and quiet in the warehouse. I was just, like, I do not want to listen to these fucking guys right now. (Amanda).

Female workers also experience consequences unique to them regarding social aspects within resource extraction that are not extended to their male colleagues. These consequences work to reinforce feeling a lack of sense of belonging and enhance isolation for female workers. One way that this is accomplished is through perpetuating rumors about female workers and through the perpetuation of double standards such as slut-shaming stereotypes directed towards females (a topic discussed later in this chapter). For instance, the ways in which innocuous interactions with male colleagues can be perceived by other workers, male or female, as with this experience described by Josephine about a male colleague defending her against other male colleagues.

And Jeremy was really funny the young fellow I was telling you about. My office was here [indicating with her hands] and his was there, but the door to his office was, he could see who was in my office, he couldn't see me, but he and some of the guys would come in sniffing around and he would go, "get away from my little person, get your own" [laughs]. So [they] actually thought that Jeremy was my boyfriend, which was an absolute joke, he was young enough to be my kid, but you know what it [his defending] saved me from all the nonsense. (Josephine)

Another example from Josephine is when talking generally about female colleagues who identify with, and try to fit in with the “trades guys”,

There's one in [every] 2 dozen like that would be like that and Obnoxious, A filthy mouth sloppy, slovenly, Disheveled. there's, there's and they’re in the office. they, they do kind of like to feel like they're a part of the trades guys. They identify with the guys. and every time you see one like that they'll be out in the smoking pit and they'll be catching rides with them in the mornings in their pickups instead of taking the bus like everyone else. (Josephine).
Josephine first states how within the parameters of the resource extraction work culture perceptions of male and female interactions are perceived in sexual terms. Additionally, she makes exceptions of female workers who interact with male colleagues versus those who tend to keep to themselves, in particular defining them as being obnoxious. The potential ensuing affect might be to isolate in order to avoid certain perceptions and stereotypes.

Thus, various material practices that promote individualism through rigorous work schedules contribute to a diminished sense of community which can, in turn, make women feel isolated, which is further maximized by female workers’ outsider status, and work to enhance barriers for female workers. In addition, these practices reinforce existing stereotypes about female workers through the concerted efforts of female workers to maintain a competitive edge over co-workers, or through unflattering, suspicious perceptions of their interactions with male colleagues. Material practices that promote individualism have additional consequences such as increased competition, referenced earlier, and female workers having to prove their knowledge and competence. These consequences will be taken up next.

5.3.2 Gender and Competency: Constant Need to Prove Yourself

Material practices conducted within the resource extraction industry are maintained not only through existing corporate policies, but also through iterative discourses between workers. These material and discursive practices promote neoliberal values and have multiple consequences for female workers. One such consequence concerns how these values interact with hegemonic norms in ways that affect perceptions of gender relating specifically to competence. Throughout their interviews, female participants referenced experiencing constant negative judgments about their level of competency or knowledge about their work. One way that judgments against competency were experienced was through male colleagues taking over
easy tasks. For instance, Amanda, a warehouse worker, described an experience she had while working in a warehouse where male colleagues would offer her tasks that she considered menial and “easy”.

It depends on the company or the guys you're working with cause [sic] I was, like...yeah, about 6 months apart between the first time I went up there and then the second time. And, like, the first time I went up there, I was with all these guys that were just miserable and, like, I think they maybe thought that I could do less because I was a female, cause, like, they would always give me super easy jobs like...like, I don’t know if I'm complaining because I got paid a lot to do it, but's it's just like things that I don't even know if they were actually jobs. Like, just like stupid stuff [laughs]. (Amanda).

The unequal gender ratio in resource extraction can lead to male workers being more likely to offer help to female workers—in other words, chivalry, perhaps related to the limited opportunities men have to interact with women, as described by Amanda:

My brother, who does fracking, they hired one girl, I guess. And, like, when they go onto the rigs and stuff to do this, he's like, ‘Some guys don't see women for like two months, they would be willing to help you, they would be doing everything for you.’ Ok, I don't really think I want that. (Amanda).

Experiences of assistance from male colleagues are consistent with findings from other studies that show women experiencing high levels of paternal chivalry (Reed, 2003). These helping behaviors would take various forms, from picking up heavy items to offering to carry a tool. Judgments made against female workers’ competence are common in hegemonic discourses about male and female abilities. Amanda made some subtle distinctions between perceptions of male and female workers’ help seeking:

I don't think he would get looked down on [for accepting help], but I think he would think he would. Just because…. I almost think that it would be harder to be a guy up there to be honest [laughs]. Because…maybe they expect more out of the guy because, you know, I don't know, cause they're guys. I have no idea, I'm just guessing [laughs]. But because there's so many guys up there that, I assume…especially the guys that have never been up there before…they wanna, [sic] you know, show they're capable, alpha male, whatever, and, but it's like, if they don't know, like if their ego’s too big, they're not going to ask [for help], right? (Amanda).
Comparing her own work experiences with that of her male colleagues, Amanda concluded that it is more difficult for male workers due to higher expectations of men stemming from “alpha male” stereotypes of self-reliance, unquestioned confidence, natural abilities and dominance. These perceptions subsequently work to portray female workers as being less competent. Thus, expectations of female workers are reduced relative to expectations of male workers. In order to maintain this hierarchy, male workers must limit or avoid asking for help, but can offer it to women because of the reciprocal ramification that weakness is associated with femininity, as is competence in certain kinds of work. This pattern is validated by Amanda when she tries to provide a rationale for the distinction between males and females with the logic that, “maybe they expect more out of the guy because…they're guys.” The “cause they’re guys” rationale connotes a sense that both knowledge and competency is gendered, and is masculinized. This continued spatial gendering in the workplace in terms of perceptions of competence in resource extraction labour is consistent with findings from other research studies on gender and workplace experiences (Pacholok, 2013, p.92; Britton, 2003; Agapiou, 2002; Chetkovich, 1997; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1997; Martin, 1994; Padavic, 1991; Anger, Cake, & Fuchs, 1988; 1984). These stereotypes reinforce the gendered division of labour, such that women continue to take on jobs within sectors associated with the social reproduction of labour (Dorow, 2015) and continue to make up only 4.4 percent of CEOs in the S&P 500\textsuperscript{18} companies, for example (Catalyst, 2017). In addition, these stereotypes are reinforced through enduring gender pay gaps that exist in diverse occupations at every level from the most “elite” and “prestigious” to the most “readily available”.

\textsuperscript{18} The Standard & Poor's 500 indicator measures the stock value of top 500 corporations.
Cases of female workers having to prove their competence and knowledge are not limited to positions that have a lower ranking, but are also prevalent higher up on the professional ladder. This is reflected in Caitriona’s experience working in a higher-ranking position. Caitriona carries the title “white hat”, a title that separates her from lower ranking workers in less professional positions within the industry. Her higher status, however, does not relieve her from having to prove her competency. When describing what her job entails, she immediately begins with, “So, you are coaching, we do not dictate work”. By this comment, she sets a tone that diminishes her level of authority. She goes on to demonstrate that she is challenged and has to prove herself with every new rotation, regardless of her many years of experience in the job:

You're always going to have some people that are going to be just ignorant no matter what you do and that's, that's with any work. So, I think it's just how your attitude is and how you want to be perceived…and then there are some that are going to test you, and I think if you come across very strong right off the top, then they know that this is your limitations, then they don't question again. So, it just depends on where you're at. And sometimes, it's a little tougher for women in a superior position vs. a woman that's maybe just coming in as a worker…. They don't want to…. They're testing you to see exactly how much you know…. And, you're always going to feel a little bit that you're this center of focus when you're walking into somewhere new…. You're having to prove yourself. So, I find the first little part is just this constant justification. So, you're almost like so exhausted because you justify, you justify, you justify and you're like, “Just listen!” And…but once they get to know how you work…and again it's how your supervisors work too. Every construction manager's different, every project manger is different, every supervisor is different. So, you gotta [sic] be able to understand what they want, and you do it and it's easier. So, you adapt to what they want. (Caitriona).

Even in a managerial position, Caitriona experiences barriers within the resource extraction industry. Her expertise is questioned rather than taken for granted, based on the qualifications necessary to enter into the position. Instead, her authority and competence is tested, and she faces repeated challenges, with a constant need to prove herself with every new site she visits. Her many years of experience are not perceived as a sign of her accomplishments or competence in the eyes of her new colleagues. This is consistent with Pacholok’s (2013) findings that female
firefighters had to work harder than males to prove their competence. She concluded that “women who enter male-dominated, blue-collar occupations must work exceptionally hard to demonstrate that they are competent workers” (Pacholok, 2013, p.92; Britton, 2003; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Chetkovich, 1997; Yoder & Aniakudo, 1997; Martin, 1994; Padavic, 1991).

The enduring reality of gender inequality, marked by continued challenges to female workers’ competence and knowledge, persists despite positive shifts in attitudes regarding women in the workplace. When discussing this issue, Josephine reflects, “Yeah, it's…something that I obviously heard about growing up, and it’s something I thought we were past, I don't know why [laughs]…. It's pathetic! When you think it's 2016!”

When Caitriona was asked about what recommendations she would like to see implemented by resource extraction companies to improve the circumstances for female workers, she reflected on the limited opportunities, and the necessity to justify women’s competence: “I think, you’re never going to have this, but to be treated as an equal…and not have to justify over and over why you think this.”

Instances of sexism are reinforced through existing material practices, which are evidenced throughout evaluations from participants when discussing various aspects of their experience. These practices continue to dominate through the application of neoliberal discourses and discourses of hegemonic masculinities that affect female workers in a multitude of ways. Josephine speaks to this persistence of sexist practices when contemplating how, “I thought we were past that, I don’t know why”, laughing in dismay and with a note of exasperation that attempts to fight against sexist practices have not been more successful. This is especially frustrating when efforts to reject hegemonic discourses that marginalize female workers are met with resistance by those social agents who have the greatest authority (Glass & Rose-Redwood,
2014) such as company bosses, leaving the marginalized under pressure to cope with the status quo. Attempts to challenge the status quo can have detrimental consequences for workers, such as losing their jobs, leaving them vulnerable, and thereby maintain barriers faced by female workers.

### 5.3.3 Precarious Employment and Competition in Resource Extraction

Another aspect of neoliberalism that affects female workers is precarious employment, leading to high levels of competition between workers. According to Herod and Lambert “women are disproportionately represented in jobs associated with temporary and part time forms of wage and salaried employment” (Herod & Lambert, 2016, p 1-2; Vosko & Clark, 2009). Insecurity linked to precarious work is fundamental to the advancement of neoliberalism in the “name of competitive efficiency” (Herod & Lambert, 2016, p. 317), which is considered desirable. In other words, competition is preferred because it will “inspire” workers to bring their “best” work, and this is enhanced through increased precarious employment. High levels of competition arise when work opportunities are limited through increases in short-term, contract positions, reductions in long-term, secure positions, and a simultaneous high demand from workers looking for adequate work. Issues associated with these are increased for female workers in resource extraction due to the overall feminization of employment sectors that remain the most vulnerable and precarious. High levels of competition foster disconnect between, as individuals perceive each other as a potential threat. Another consequence of high competition and precarious employment affects workers’ pay.

[There is] so much competition and not very many jobs, and that's where I'm saying again, now it's all in the employers' hands. So, if they want to say, “I'm paying you 20 bucks an hour” there'll be someone who'll work for that 20. (Caitriona)
The resource extraction industry is affected by the consequences of neoliberalism through the pervasive occurrence of precarious employment, in turn, affecting workers’ pay. While possessing skills has thus far been articulated as an asset for securing a position within resource extraction, it can have the opposite effect as well. For instance, if it costs an employer more to pay a worker with more skills and experience, companies may hire someone with less experience in order to pay the worker less to perform the same job. In this way, having experience can also disadvantage workers. Caitriona speaks of these impacts, recognizing that her experience is undervalued from this perspective:

I kind of feel like I did things a little backward, cause [sic] I started with the working, then put myself through school, so working full-time, and school full-time. And they went right to school… and came out and they have no field experience. Now, they hire me to come in and train them, and then they want to dispose of me. So, that's kind of the mentality of some of these organizations now… plus, the more experience you have, the more they have to pay you. So, we can pay these kids who come out of university peanuts, they don't know anything, but we're (referring to the companies) still covered. (Caitriona).

Therefore, the market-centered approach to bottom line economics that guides decisions around hiring and firing can threaten the security of long-time workers when their experience is perceived as being less worthy than dollars saved by the industry/company. Operating from this perspective fails to improve productivity as marked by respecting workers’ skills. Instead, it perceives workers as disposable, which can further diminish their sense of belonging and generally their overall quality of life.

Precarious employment, evidenced by fewer long-term, secure positions, and increases in short-term contract positions, enhances high levels of competition between workers, due to workers looking for affordable wages when those opportunities are limited. Contract work makes up the majority of work in resource extraction. In times of recession, job shortages are further
increased. High volumes of workers automatically lose their jobs when a contract is complete.

Lynn speaks to this when discussing the consequences of the oil industry downturn:

> Everybody got laid off, so in this last November there was 80,000 people that were laid off. I was one of those 80,000. Well, our job was completed, so we all knew we were going to be laid off. But to find another job with 80,000 others out of work...and then oil dropped down to $26 a barrel at it's lowest, and yeah...no jobs! (Lynn).

This high volume of competition reinforcing of workers having to prove their worthwhileness.

This may be more pronounced for female workers already facing challenges to their competence, increasing the pressure for them to maintain a competitive edge, especially if female workers are perceived as less desirable. While attempts are being made to increase the number of women working in trades, the number of women on primary sector work sites continues to be vastly lower than men. One other important outcome of precarious employment is the upper hand given to bosses regarding hiring, with little opportunity for workers to negotiate their wage.

> Hiring practices are also influenced by work contacts and favoritism, a reality participants were acutely aware of. For instance, Caitriona described how she managed to secure a new contract:

> If you're contracting, or your staff, that's all things.... I'm coming to an end...for the one organization...and there's one person that said, “You should really keep Caitriona cause [sic] she has everything that the organization's looking for—she can think outside the box, she's very good at what she does”, yet they're going to keep the young kids. It just turns out that, in the end, I found something else, because as you work there, you network. So, a lot of people that have seen you, or whatever, when you work there.... So, most of the time, I just get hired [by name, based on reputation]. (Caitriona).

Having strong connections and a work network is critical in these more precarious times. Many of the participants gained entry to the industry through knowing someone already working in it. Josephine commented on this: “I... realize that there was approximately 52 men for every woman, woman. [A] good portion of the men are there via their friends. So, the ‘old boys club’, we've sort of touched on that. And then opportunities for men and higher wages.” Within male-
dominated resource extraction industries, where an ‘old boys club’ mentality is still prevalent, opportunities can be compromised and weakened for female workers. The importance of having strong connections was also evident in Lynn’s comments when discussing lay-off procedures (Lynn experienced being laid off): “I think you know there is always a rhyme or reason (to who and how people get laid off), and if you’re not in real tight with the project manager you might be one of the first to go.” Workers who have the most precarious of jobs and positions, often working on the periphery, or tertiary sectors, are at increased risk of losing their jobs. As female workers continue to be overrepresented in these sectors of the industry (camp cooks and administration, for example), they are at a greater risk to lose their jobs.

The turbulence of the oil industry and constant precarious employment motivated Nicole to leave the industry after working in it for a decade, and start her own business.

I can't really think of anything else that...keeps women from going up there, aside from the actual opportunities, the actual availability of work. Like, my contract ended December 8th, and... the job was over, and then promptly the price of oil, you know, tanked, and the Canadian dollar tanked, and the economy tanked…. So, I sort of made peace with the fact that I would be out of work, and off for a couple of months.... Well, I have reinvented myself.... I've started my own business...because I'm so tired of being a slave to that machine.... You build it, you go on, right? So, you're always looking at, you know, the next job, the next project.... I was there in 2008 as well, when oil hit the skids.... So, anyways, the long and short of it is that I woke up one day in my unemployment and I have friends who are still, who were unemployed before me, who are still unemployed. So, women—now there is tons of jobs now, I understand, for tradespeople right now, but it's for the types of jobs that are, you know, sort of female. I hate to say that, you know, admin, travel...those jobs, there's been a shift because a lot of companies have moved them to their head offices in Calgary vs. site-based, so there's going to be a change with this oil business. But...I decided that I didn't want to do this anymore, so I just started my own business. (Nicole)

This passage expounds on issues related to neoliberalism in the resource extraction industry, for instance, through the promotion of the resilient and entrepreneurial subject (Herod & Lambert, 2016; Brown, 2015; Connell, 2010; Harvey, 2005). Nicole’s inability to secure stable work in resource extraction and struggle through continued precarious employment and fewer contracts,
forced her to start her own business. While her ability to reinvent herself embodies the successful ideal of the resilient and entrepreneurial subject, this resilience may not be universally experienced, and barriers associated with continued precarious employment and labour insecurity may put other workers at an even greater risk. The realities of fewer contracts are higher for female workers insofar as the jobs they “dominate” are moved and subsumed into downtown head offices, whereas trades jobs that males tend to dominate continue to produce opportunities. Josephine discussed these gendered consequences regarding precarious employment in resource extraction resulting from the downturn in oil sales, leading to her being laid off.

I do wanna go back, yeah…. We don't really have a choice on whether you stay or not because the jobs end. The only way that jobs don't end is if you happen to get on a maintenance job, because it's there forever, but maintenance jobs, they're like gold and you can't get on them because nobody ever quits [laughs], and that would be the gold standard to get a maintenance job. (Josephine).

Nicole and Josephine express how precarious labour exists within certain sectors of resource extraction and are gendered in terms of labour division. The positions that suffer the least in terms of being part-time, even during times of economic recession and oil industry downturn, are jobs that are highly masculinized (Negra & Tasker, 2014) through the male dominance inherent within those jobs, such as maintenance work, referred to as “the gold standard”. As far as jobs in administration, they are some of the first to go, and as Nicole mentions, are being siphoned away to company head offices located in Calgary. Lynn also notes this reality when asked about a three-day hiring blitz event hosted by a major oil company, that was held in Kelowna in 2015.

Hundreds of local workers attended, hoping to be hired. Lynn described the event:

Yeah, I actually went. Both [a family member] and I went to that job fair...and spoke to a couple individuals about it.... Most of those job fairs are for trades. They’re not really... we went just hoping they’d take our resume, maybe, something, anything...but it was a specific job fair for trades. (Lynn)
Lynn’s sentiments regarding hiring specifically for trades, and Nicole’s sentiments concerning “the types of jobs that are sort of female, I hate to say that, you know admin, travel…those jobs, there’s been a shift because a lot of companies have moved them to their head offices in Calgary vs. site” are validated in a report from Global News Okanagan where Sneh Seetal, a spokesperson for the oil company hosting the hiring event, stated “The majority of the downsizing, or workforce reductions that have occurred within our organization impacted Calgary-based staff or Fort McMurray staff in non-operational roles, and those aren’t the types of positions that we’re currently recruiting for our [name of mine] mine” (Gaffney, 2015). The types of jobs (trades, heavy equipment operating) available were those still predominantly male-dominated. This feminizing of precarious and peripheral positions reinforces women’s continued minority status and reinforce their economic marginalization, fortifying the dominance of values of hegemonic masculinities.

5.3.4 Neoliberal Individualism and Masculine Hegemony Through Lack of Family-Friendly Policies

The emphasis on individualism not only permeates social practices taking place within the resource extraction work culture, but also at the level of policies. Certain policies, or their lack, have specific consequences for female workers, and are governed by values of hegemonic masculinities. One such policy area relates to motherhood and parenting. When discussing the work culture, Lynn referenced individualism and directly linked individualism with a lack of family inclusion:

You can’t, there is no children, there’s no pets, there’s no anything in the oil sands. You go up and…there’s no families, it’s just individuals. You know, if people are married or boyfriend or girlfriend, that’s one thing…but that’s not even to say that you get the same rooms cause they’re twin beds and that kind of thing. So, if you have small children, you would definitely need your spouse to be at home looking after your children. (Lynn).
Lynn articulates the work exclusive environment with, “there’s no anything”, as well as an emphasis on individualism with, “there’s not families, it’s just individuals”. The emphasis on individualism, characterized by a lack of community and family integration, systemically reinforces both hegemonic masculinities and neoliberal values that privilege male workers through the exclusion of females, and ongoing promotion of a gendered division of labour. This is accomplished through a non-holistic focus on capital output versus a consideration for a nexus of elements that can fortify workers’ quality of life and open opportunities for workers (Ferguson, 2011; Amit, 2002). The values of neoliberalism put the market as central, “the most efficient and moral institution for organizing human affairs, which seems to suggest that it could and perhaps even should replace all other institutions (e.g. family, state, community and society) as the primary mechanism for producing, promoting, and preserving social order” (Springer, Birth & Macleavy, 2016, p.3). The consequence of this is that it furthers a hegemonic gendered division of labour that marginalizes women (especially in the cases of the most vulnerable) and reinforces notions that these other social spheres are less valuable, validated through their status as unpaid. Consequential to this is a lack of priority given to family-friendly policies such as maternity leave, which are not viewed as being profitable for markets (Evans, 2015; Brown, 2004).

Male workers also recognize motherhood and parenting as being an existing barrier for women. An example of this arose when Nicole passed on the view of her male friend and colleague to whom she showed the questionnaire. She explained:

My friend was here last night and…I was reading him the questions, and he works away as well…he's worked away, like, forever…and I was like, what's the big [barrier for women]…he said, ‘Well, with women,...the travel, right? Like, if you have children…. I mean, I know women that are up there and they've left their children in care with…whoever, their parents, their ex-husbands, that sort of thing…. So, you've got that against you. I mean, there is so many single mothers…everybody's divorced…(Nicole).
Interestingly, Nicole’s male friend and colleague (also a resource extraction worker) raised motherhood as being a major barrier facing female workers, however, he did not extend this to male workers or fatherhood. Inherently, there is a gendered assumption delineating parenting as women’s work, or as feminine. This answer from Nicole comes directly after discussing women’s minority status, which inspired her to conclude how motherhood is a main barrier facing female workers, and maintains male dominance in the resource extraction industry. In other words, the continued male dominance experienced in resource extraction is a direct consequence of long-distance commuting in so far as long-distance commuting interferes with a women’s ability to look after her child/children. This assumption itself reinforces the gendered division of labour that views women as the main caretaker of children, and men as the breadwinners. Discourses of the male breadwinner and the female caretaker are pervasive across the world, and have a particular history in resource extraction (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2011; Porter, 1999). From this perspective, there seems to be no apparent barriers for male workers linked to having a family, let alone as being the impetus for acquiring a minority status in resource extraction. This is problematic for female workers, but equally for fathers in resource extraction. Nicole validated her friend’s perception when she added: “I never started doing this till after our children were raised…, because women are made to be home, so, that is one of the things.” Nicole seemed to accept and clearly reinforced the stereotype that a women’s place is in the home, on the heels of explaining her male friend’s perspective regarding the issue. She also confirmed that opportunities in resource extraction are not available to females who are parenting.

Neoliberal values that valorize market centrism contribute to the maintenance of companies’ lack of prioritization of family-friendly policies. This lack of priority for such
policies becomes a systemic and material practice that enables and reinforces attitudes regarding the gendered division of labour, and the hegemonic view of males as the head of the household, the provider, and breadwinner. Gendered divisions regarding parenting and work were reiterated by both male and female workers, as expressed above (beliefs about parenting and work, as well as actions such as waiting until children were grown before working away), and thus further reinforce these insular ideologies as being the hegemonic norm.

Barriers associated with parenting exist for women in diverse fields, not limited to resource extraction, although they may be more pronounced due to the long-distance commuting. Josephine, like Nicole began working in resource extraction only after her children were grown. She explained, “I think it's a great place to work, but then again, I'm single, mature, and I knew the only reason I was going was to make money.” (Josephine). Therefore, an exception is made regarding available opportunities to work in resource extraction for mothers of underage children as per, “I am single and mature”. Josephine also emphasizes that working in resource extraction is driven solely by financial gain, underlining a capital/market centrisation associated with this industry.

Motherhood as a barrier is consistent with previous findings from studies looking at women’s experiences in resource extraction in both Canada and Australia, which found a lack of priority given to family-friendly policies (Ranson, 2005; 2000; 1998), and subsequent limited opportunities for females regarding entering and maintaining long-term work opportunities in resource extraction, or alternatively, limiting opportunities for women who want to have families/children; this also reinforces a hegemonic gendered division of labour, with support from discourses on “good” motherhood being those who stay home and raise the children.
(Zimmerman, Aberle, Krafchick, & Harvey, 2008). These barriers persist despite previous findings suggesting challenges associated with them for women.

Caitriona was the only participant in this study who worked while she had a dependent child. She was able to work by relying on her parents to look after her child when she was away working, and this permitted her to support her family as a single mother. She explained what this was like:

Parenting is very tough because you're always going to have, if you're married, you're always going to have one person looking after the kids for the majority [of the time], and really when you come home, you're kind of the outsider looking in because you don't want to…. They already got the way they do everything, so, you're kinda [sic] coming home and figuring out how you play into this. So, as a single parent myself…., my parents helped me out quite a bit when it came to sitting and things like that, so, you know, there's times I'd work, when that is all I did was work. (Caitriona)

While she struggled with being away and missing moments with her child, she expressed how,

You try to provide in the long run and, and hopefully the child understands that, you know, I'm working away because I'm making both incomes here. And, if you're going to get ahead and you want all those things, this is what it's going to take to work, so that's…. I wasn't going to be one of those single parents that just watches the system support them, I was going to go out and make a good living, work hard, and prove to my son that this is what happens when you work hard. (Caitriona).

Neoliberal discourses that promote attitudes that individuals are responsible exclusively for their own monetary success and ability to support themselves independently are evident in Caitriona’s rationale for being away. She emphasizes that this is accomplished strictly through having a strong work ethic. She concludes that receiving government support is strictly the outcome of a lack of a strong work ethic, thus dismissing the potential role of government or companies in terms of making available family-friendly policies to support lone mothers/parents trying to financially support and raise their children while employed. Neoliberal values associated with hard work are values that Caitriona feels are particularly important to pass onto her child, even above her ability to be physically present for her child. Incidences of the
importance of work and financial benefits taking perceptual importance over physical time with children was also evident in Dorow’s (2015) study. This prioritization of financial values over other values is consistent with values of market centrist associated with neoliberalism, which put contributions toward the market at the center of human values. This primary focus on market contributions maintains the existing gendered division of labour through understandings of the home as an unpaid sphere, and also female overrepresentation within this sphere. Lynn, and Amanda are not parents; they perceived their single and nonparent status as being a facilitating factor for having opportunities in resource extraction. For example, Amanda pointedly identifies this status as influencing her decision to work in resource extraction. “If you don't have kids or a relationship, I would say just do it. It's a good experience, I think, just because, I don't know, like money-wise or not, it's just a different life that job in itself.” Only when women are not “tied down” by relationships and children can they have opportunities to high pay and good experiences such as described of resource extraction work. Amanda raised the issue of children again when discussing why she decided to go back to work in resource extraction after a difficult initial experience, “I'm not going back up there, like I know from last time. And then after a while, like, I was just thinking about it, I was, like, I don't have a family here, like, I have family, but I don't have like kids, or I wasn't in a relationship.”

Perceptions regarding female’s opportunities in resource work are contingent on whether they have families or not, in ways not extended to male workers. The perception and empirical reality that motherhood is a barrier for both access to opportunities and subsequent retention rates for women in resource extraction work is consistent with findings on women in the military, where motherhood is a significant barrier for recruiting and retaining females (Smith & Rosenstein, 2017). Having a family and children continues to create barriers for women
regarding access to opportunities as well as in terms of having the flexibility to work away in resource extraction.

5.4 Evaluations on Appearance and Personality of Female Workers in Resource Extraction

This next section will analyze the participants’ perceptions of preferred personality traits and representations of gender through appearance and success in resource extraction.

The prevalence of hegemonic masculinities in resource extraction is reinforced through a male-dominated work environment in which certain traits are valued over others. The consequence of this is varied and affects both male and female workers. However, the impacts on female workers becomes more pronounced, as female workers have to negotiate tensions concerning their gender directly, requiring that they “perform” in certain ways that fit in with the dominant male culture (Butler, 1990). Idealized traits are delineated through established and taken-for-granted norms of hegemonic masculinities. The consequences for female workers in this are that their success in the industry is contingent of their capacity to “perform” effectively according to these hegemonic expectations. Previous findings on research looking at the experiences of female workers in resource extraction in Canada and Australia found that female workers largely conform through processes of assimilation to the overall masculine culture as a means to fit in (Pirrota, 2009; Miller, 2004; Reed, 2003). Ways of performing are established through characteristics of appearance and behaviour. Throughout the interviews certain themes regarding these traits were illuminated. A discussion on this will be taken up next.

5.4.1 “The Right Personality” Fitting In and Gendered Experiences in Resource Extraction

Throughout the interviews, discourses of strength, resilience, and extroversion were outlined as being fundamental for women’s “survival” and success in resource extraction. These
discourses are consistent with hegemonic masculinities stemming from “historical American mythologies of rugged individualism, stoicism, and persistence [that] have shaped the symbolic construction of the male blue-collar workers as the quintessential American man, the self-made individual who perseveres under hardship, who sees every crisis as an opportunity” (Banet-Weiser, 2014, p. 89). Further, these discourses exist and persist in Alberta’s resource extraction industry through historic associations of cowboy hero masculinity. These discourses shape the work culture within resource extraction and affect the experiences of those individuals, whose subjectivities are in tension with these hegemonic masculine traits, creating certain challenges for those workers. As previously mentioned, having a strong work ethic is vitally important, and is tied to individualism. For female workers, this is pronounced through having to also refrain from engaging with male colleagues in certain ways, which does not apply to male workers. For instance, Caitriona speaks of success being linked to having the right attitude, which she defined as,

I have always had the attitude that I go there for work, and work only. So, I don't get into any other stuff that goes on...and I've been very successful doing so. So, you just, you go in, you have to have that attitude, right? And, you have to have the attitude, [that] this is work and try to separate yourself. You still have to be very professional..., but honestly, you have to fit into the male group (Caitriona).

Although discourses of “head down and work” impact male workers as well as female workers, there are specific gendered consequences that impact women in different ways than men. First, being professional is equated with fitting into the male group, and involves having “to separate yourself” for women; this is necessary in order to avoid negative stereotypes of female workers, such as females work in resource extraction to find a relationship as opposed to gaining good work experiences and good pay. This isolation further isolates female workers fortifying values
of work exclusivity. Behaviors around grooming, for example, can be taken as signs of looking for male attention, rather than a choice to feel good about one’s appearance. Caitriona further spoke to this point directly when reflecting on the important of maintaining professionalism. “Yeah, so I always say dress professionally, you know don’t, if you’re going up there to look for certain things, you will find that.” In these passages from Caitriona she equates certain dress/grooming with looking for “certain things”, implying male attention. Nicole discussed how stereotypes regarding appearance become an excuse for employers to discriminate against hiring female workers:

> It's a construction site, like, people are working at height, and guys will, you know…. I mean, yeah, I've had to send women home because the superintendents are like, that is just not acceptable!’, and I've had superintendents say, that's why we don't hire women. Yes, because it's like, too much of a distraction, and this is what goes on, and we are always like, hey, hey, like, we’re in turtle necks and [in audible], but don't be painting everyone with the same brush (Nicole).

Nicole makes an exception of herself in an effort to reconcile tensions associated with her gender and work in resource extraction based on existing stereotypes of women with “we’re in turtle necks” and “don’t be painting everyone with the same brush”. She also contrasted herself with women who chose to dress “not in turtle neck, but instead Lulu Lemons”, and “I had to send people back to camp to change because it was inappropriate, you know? You can't wear Lulu Lemons to work and a crop top. That's not cool.” Referring to the inappropriate clothing as “distracting” reinforces the assumption that women were asking for attention and men have no self-control when it comes to females. The consequences of this are not only problematic for females reduced to arousing stimuli for male pleasure, but also simultaneously reduces males to their biological instincts, operating without reason. These same stereotypes were reinforced when Caitriona discussed success and having the right attitude.
No, they’re [the men] generally pretty good. Like I said, there are going to be some women that...take things a little too far, so they want to entice, but then when the man…. So, I always say dress professionally, you know, don't...if you're going up there to look for certain things, you will find that. And just like anything else, you know, I have always had the attitude that I go there for work and work only. So, I don't get into any other stuff that goes on, and I've been very successful doing so. (Caitriona)

Caitriona downplays any sexism that exists in the industry under the broad generalization that male workers being “pretty good”, and if they’re good, there must not be any sexism. Attention is not focused on the grey area that exists with existing pervasive male privilege constituting female subordination, simultaneous to the reality of good men living and working everywhere in the world. Thus, sexism is not the consequence of “bad men”, but of broad, interconnected, structural, sexist practices imbued in society operating at various levels. Individuals, both male and female, are mutually and continually reinforcing these sexist practices regularly. An example of this is the comment that some “women take things a little too far, so they want to entice, but then when the man, then all of a sudden…. So, I always say dress professionally”. This conclusion from Caitriona reinforces existing discourses of rape culture and victim blaming that directs responsibility to the behavior of the female (or male) victim, including their dress, in terms of “they asked for it” (Kimmel, 2005). Immediately implicated again is this requirement to have the “right” attitude, echoing aspects introduced earlier in this discussion that require that females engage only in work. Any deviation from this has negative consequences associated with it. One consequence is being slut-shamed, stemming directly from discourses of rape culture (Tanenbaum, 2015; Matthews, 2005) in the form of gossip, such as Josephine pointed out, “You know what guys are like, they yap. Another notch. And then the woman is sitting there all embarrassed. Honey, this is what we tried to tell you”. These insular views on the ways female workers ought to act have significant impacts on seeking help from those affected, such as Nicole describes here,
I wish that there was a place where women could go that was like an objective, like, where people were objective, like, they weren't connected to any of the contractors, you know, it wasn't their human resources people. Because I've been involved in several issues where the human resources people sided on the management side vs. the employee side. I mean, it's horrible! It's horrible, like some of the things that go on up there that are…and a lot of times it's [inaudible] and, it's and people who are in the outside world where it just goes unreported because people, because people don't want to lose their jobs, they, they know what um they know what the repercussions would be like. You'll be shamed, you know, because the guys will be like, oh yeah, you know she's just whatever, you know, she's just nothing but a, you know, a bitch, or she's nothing but a whore, she's, you know, blah, blah, blah, and, you know, lots of times…so, a lot of times it just goes unreported and like the, you know, like the things that…like, it's shocking that in 2016…that the things that are said. (Nicole).

Dichotomies delineating appropriate behaviors between male and female workers that maintain that female workers should avert certain male and female interactions create challenges for help seeking that reinforce gender stereotypes. As noted, there can be multiple serious consequences with reporting, such as job loss. While women acknowledged that there are sites where sexism is not tolerated in any capacity, barriers still exist when it comes to seeking help when issues arise. Consequences include blaming women by labeling them “bitches” and “whores” are offering little to no recourse. Thus, coping strategies identified by Nicole that females use is avoidance coping by not reporting.

Attitudes regarding females were further generalized under hegemonic masculine stereotypes through discourses classifying females as being weaker. An example of this comes from Amanda when she described expectations of female workers in resource extraction,

I find working with guys much easier than women. Just because, like, women can get catty, and bitchy, and they can hold a grudge for years over like the most pointless shit. And with guys, I've never really had that issue. Like, yeah they can, especially being up there, they can be like girls for sure. They don't, like, hold onto things, you know, they're just like, fuck, whatever, I don't care’, and that's kind of more the…So, it kind of worked better for me, I think. I would say…I don't know, you wouldn't really find too many super "girly" girls up there anyway that are like, you know, any girl that's up there is obviously in a trade or something. Well, I guess, like the people who actually work in the camps, housekeeping, the cooks, housekeeping and all that. Yeah, like at first I was intimidated because like I said, you don't know what to expect. You're
going up for two weeks and you're like, this could fucking suck. This could be horrible and I don't even know. (Amanda).

She further said, “I pretty much expected any other females up there to kind of like have the same somewhat mentality as me, I guess” (Amanda). Once again prevalent are discourses of females perceived as being bitchy, in addition to other negative stereotypes such as not getting along with other women, holding grudges and generally being “catty”. In addition, she delineated “girly girls” in hyper-feminized positions within the resource extraction industry, such as housekeeping and cooks. This delineation fortifies existing attitudes underlying a gendered division of labour that excludes women from work outside of “caring work”. Concurrently reinforced in this statement is a masculinization of resource extraction work, through making exceptions of females who work in resource extraction relative to females outside of resource extraction. Exceptions regarding females working in and out of resource extraction are also made by Caitriona who stated,

There would've been no women in the trade. So, of course, you have to prove to yourself that you're not just going to be a prissy woman, looking for certain things [relationships]. You have to be strong, and you have to have some big shoulders, and let me tell you, they yell, they do everything possible, and you have to withstand that. (Caitriona).

Having to prove oneself in a variety of ways is clearly important for women working on resource extraction sites, and is taken for granted through established norms, which are not to be deviated from, as marked by comments such as “So, of course you have to prove yourself”. Proving oneself in order to fit into the male work culture affects not only judgments against female workers’ work ethic, competence, and knowledge, but also judgments against their strength as well. Discourses that articulate females as weak and “prissy” continue to be reinforced in these instances by the female participants, in spite of their own personal experiences and strengths that contradict these stereotypes. Instead, they make exceptions of “strong women” as oddities.
Discursively, the use of “big shoulders” here also references physical traits associated with masculinity. In addition, when referring to the behaviors of male workers in terms of “they yell, they do anything” she concluded with the admonition that “you have to withstand that”. This illustrates a capitulation of the status quo so as to avoid being viewed as, and subsequently labeled, a malcontent, or weak. Generalizations regarding gender that split gender into oppositional binaries, transfiguring individual’s traits to match these stereotypes, are problematic for a number of reasons. They limit and obstruct inherent complexities that exist in individuals, thus diminishing opportunities for individuals to live authentic lives that are not based on gender stereotypes.

One major tension affecting female workers, as previously described, is motherhood. Motherhood is perceived as a barrier for accessing work opportunities. Additionally, there exist discourses about motherhood as being “easy”, as seen in Amanda’s comments about friends of hers who “stayed home to have children”,

I know like tons of girls that I went to high school with, they all want to be stay at home moms or whatever, and I just assume because they're fucking lazy, but I know having children is its own thing, so I, I don't know. So, I'm not even sure why he felt like that, I didn't ask, I guess maybe I didn't want to know, or I didn't care enough like, I was like, well I know every, not everybody's like him, so I didn't really bother me, I was just like ok. (Amanda)

These stereotypes exist due to discourses that women should “be bionic” and “be able to do it all” in terms of having a top career and a family. This reinforces tensions around work-life balance, as illustrated above in the section on motherhood as a barrier in resource extraction. Furthermore, these stereotypes are reinforced through broad policy and social practices that maintain that work conducted in the home, such as parenting is unpaid, thus easy. These discourses fit systemically with other discourses which view females as damsels wanting a man to take care of them. Exceptions made about females working in resource extraction can be
perceived as being good in terms of fitting into the broader male culture, but also as being bad relative to expectations on femininity. For instance, Amanda remembered an instance where a male colleague said that he would not date a female working in resource extraction:

I was eating breakfast with some of the guys, or lunch or dinner, or whatever, and one of the guys [said], “I would never date a girl that worked up north, or was working up north”, or something like that. But I think he has kind of like, you know, old school mentality of stay at home wives, or something. And it's like, if that's what you both want, like whatever, I don't care, but it doesn't apply to everybody. (Amanda)

This ‘old school mentality’ continues to exist based on insular definitions of femininity and masculinity, based on hegemonic masculine values.

For women, success in resource extraction work comes with certain expectations regarding how female workers ought to behave and look, expectations that are based on hegemonic masculinities that shape the work culture of resource extraction. Hegemonic masculinities are maintained through continued male domination. As women negotiate tensions regarding their gender in the male-dominated resource extraction industry due to their minority status, they face many negative stereotypes.

While the female participants in this study predominantly expressed that there was little to no sexism in resource extraction, they experienced various material practices within the industry that reinforce sexist attitudes about females. These attitudes concerned all aspects of the female’s experiences, from their dress, to their speech, their competence, knowledge and strength, as well as judgments against personal choices regarding engaging with male colleagues in any capacity, to having children and motherhood. Discursively, female participants tried to reconcile these existing tensions related to their gender by making exceptions of women in resource extraction relative to females outside of resource extraction. Through these discursive and material practices, however, they reinforce gendered stereotypes. In some instances,
participants seemingly had very pessimistic views about the amelioration of sexism, in spite of huge shifts that have already taken place with respect to females in this industry. Pessimism was marked by comments such as, “I know this will never happen” from Caitriona when talking about equality, and “I don’t know why” on the subject of expecting that things would be different regarding sexism from Josephine. It is important to emphasize at this point a key perspective of this study as articulated by Nunn (2013), which is that,

By focusing on women’s involvement in reproducing hegemonic masculinity, this Article does not attempt to shift accountability toward women for their subordinate position (as I recognize the social processes which produce masculine domination to be much more complex than this). Women’s roles in reproducing masculine narratives are more a reflection of the strength and pervasiveness of hegemonic forms of masculinity than the involvement and complicity of women. (Nunn, 2013, p. 806).

The pervasiveness of hegemonic forms of masculinity that exist in male-dominated resource extraction work sites create an environment where female workers’ successes are in some ways contingent on their having to reproduce hegemonic masculinities. This reproduction, or reinforcing of hegemonic norms become the coping strategies for maintaining their position within the industry. Understanding how these dominant discursive and material practices are produced and reproduced is crucial for overcoming their marginalizing consequences and cultivating transformative change. Coping strategies used by female participants therefore, take on complex forms.

5.5 Coping Strategies Used by Participants

Along with evaluations of barriers and challenges for female workers, the coping strategies that the participants used also coincide with findings regarding neoliberal values and hegemonic masculinities. There were a number of approaches participants used to cope with the barriers they identified and faced, barriers that were associated with their minority status working in a male-dominated industry. They usually employed cognitive and avoidant strategies versus
active coping strategies\textsuperscript{19}, including “putting up” with challenges and barriers through efforts of being strong and enduring, invisibility as a strategy through avoidance and/or disengagement, strict work focus, proving their abilities, “keeping the eye on the prize”, and through evaluations of confidence. While instances of active coping strategies were also used, such as reporting harassment, these fostered limited benefits and at times had potential to elicit further negative consequences.

5.5.1 Putting Up with It: Strength and Endurance

Participants in this study often discussed the importance of being strong and able to withstand a lot in terms of barriers such as harassment. Caitriona explained, “You have to be strong, and you have to have some big shoulders, and let me tell you, they yell, they do everything possible, and you have to withstand that.” Within this statement no indication is evident regarding efforts to resist, or oppose the existing social structures. Instead, Caitriona’s statements mirror discourses of maintaining a “stiff upper lip” and “tied up boot straps”, both associated with hegemonic perceptions of masculine toughness. She went on to distinguish between the newer, younger female employees and females who have been around longer:

So, I would say back in the day, it would take a very strong, independent woman to do it. Nowadays, it's a lot different, it's like way different, especially the organizations coming in. We have a lot more younger...staff coming in, and they kind of place them in organizations where there, you know,...you got the gentleness. For me, it was thrown right into sink or swim. So that's kind of where...cause I'm a type A personality, very strong, so that way that's why I fit in so well. I had to take a lot of crap as well. And I had to fight for everything I got till now. So, it's changed, you have a lot more women now getting into the field as trades...and they're being successful at that. (Caitriona)

\textsuperscript{19} “Domains characterized as cognitive coping, mechanisms in which cognitive strategies are used to perceive the problem situation in a more favorable light; and domains characterized as avoidant coping, involving mechanisms for coping with problems in ways that avoid dealing with the problematic issue” (Wills, 1997, p. 168).
In Caitriona’s reflections on the changes in the industry in terms of being more gender inclusive, she makes clear that success for females is heightened through organizations providing more “gentleness”, before again identifying the traits and strategies that made her successful: having a “type A personality”, being “very strong”, “taking a lot of crap”, and “fighting for everything” gained. Caitriona also said that, “a woman coming onto a site, you have to have someone of strength, a strong personality…because you’re going to be heckled…you have to be able to joke, you gave to be able to stand your ground”. Another example of a discourses emphasizing strength was Josephine’s comment about the mentality needed in order to get through the job: "Ok, you really have to be strong here, because you do have a job and there's people counting on you.” Strength as a coping strategy was tied to broader experiences of the industry overall, which was described as demanding, and not for everyone due to the pace and the type of work. The preoccupation on strength, both as a barrier and a coping strategy, is consistent with principles of hegemonic masculinities. Additionally, it echoes the findings of previous studies on female workers in resource extraction (Miller, 2004).

5.5.2 Work Exclusivity Through Working Hard and Proving Abilities

A major strategy that pervaded much of the participant interviews is the notion of having to work hard, and prove one’s abilities. When it comes to the barriers participants faced, one main one, as discussed above, was experiencing constant challenges to the adequacy of their knowledge, competence, and abilities. In an effort to counteract these perceptions, participants emphasized discourses of hard work, having knowledge, and being focused on their work. Amanda spoke directly to this when asked about what it takes to be successful; she said, “Just know your shit, like whatever you're going up there for.” Proving one’s competence and abilities as a barrier and a coping strategy is consistent with findings from other studies on female
workers in male-dominated fields such as construction (Agapiou, 2002), firefighting (Perrott, 2016; Pacholok, 2013), and policing (Veldman, Meeussen, Van Laar, Phalet, et al, 2017; Brown 2015). This was expressed clearly by Lynn who said: “When you're at work you're doing a 12-hour work day, and it's head down into the computer, and that's it”. Josephine referenced this mentality as well, when talking about how she and another female colleague perceive themselves, “I know our work ethic is like we're there to work, head down, and you're working 12 hours.” In both of these comments the emphasis on work exclusivity is marked. The emphasis on hard work illustrates perceived tensions regarding worker ability and competency with gender. Moreover, this emphasis on work coincides with the ‘work exclusive’ preponderance given as a strategy against harassment. One example was given by Caitriona, who mentioned the strict work mentality when discussing the issue of other existing, non-professional activities that take place on the work site, “I have always had the attitude that I go there for work and work only…So you just, you go in, you have to have that attitude, right? And, you have to have the attitude [that] "this is work" and try to separate yourself.” Josephine also touched on this issue when she elaborated on her advice to women thinking about entering the industry. She identified the importance of having high morals providing the types of situations that can occur, “So, you'll be sitting in your desk and you'll have a guy come sneaking in and ask you for your cell number and here is the trick, ‘Do you want to come over to my room and play cards?’ Well, that means a hook up”. In these cases, women who “fail to maintain” high morals open themselves up to negative gossip that is not extended to their male colleagues, who Josephine described as, “mostly married. I would say 99 percent are married.” Participants did engage in varying levels of social interaction, but limited these to large-scale communal interactions such as group lunches and barbeques meant for the entire team or group. Another strategy was “keeping the eye
on the prize” which Amanda described in reference to the menial tasks that male colleagues offered her,

The first time I went up there I was with all these guys that were just miserable and like, I think they maybe thought that I could do less because I was a female cause like, they would always give me super easy jobs like, like I don't know if I’m complaining because I got paid a lot to do it, but's it's just like things that I don't even know if they were actually jobs. Like, just like stupid stuff. (Amanda).

This strategy was to focus on the workplace as simply a place to make money. Consequently, the insular view of the industry as a place with the strict purpose of making money becomes a way to avoid confronting other (non-wage) forms of inequalities. Lynn also defined the workplace within similar parameters and functioning, solely in terms of making money, “It's you are there—to work, and everyone who goes up there knows they're going up to make money, period. It's, that's what it is. It's not about…it's not about anything other than that. You’re just there to work.” By framing the workplace purpose and subsequent culture through a strict work input-money output lens, as long as money is earned, other aspects of one’s experience are marginal or reduced in importance. Accordingly, inequities are evident only in so far as women have the opportunity to secure a position in the industry. The other consequence of this is that any efforts to challenge barriers may result in opportunities lost, or diminished opportunities. This was apparent in Nicole’s earlier comments regarding issues worth reporting:

I mean it, it's, it's horrible! It's horrible like some of the things that go on up there that, are and a lot of times it's [inaudible] and, it's and people who are in the outside world where it just goes unreported because people, because people don't want to lose their jobs they, they know what um they know what the repercussions would be like you'll be shamed you know because the guys will be like, oh yeah you know she's just whatever you know, she's just nothing but a you know a bitch or she's nothing but a whore she's you know blah, blah, blah and you know lots of times so, a lot of times it just goes unreported” (Nicole).

Therefore, efforts by female workers to maintain the status quo are necessary in order to maintain their positions and avoid harsh negative stereotypes.
5.5.3 Invisibility through Avoidance and/or Disengagement

Trying to deter a difficulty through practices of disengagement or avoidance was another strategy utilized by participants. This strategy corresponds directly with the strategy of maintaining strict focus on work. An example of this strategy was presented by Amanda, who had resorted to eating her lunch alone and not in the lunchroom to avoid hearing the offensive comments about women made by her colleagues:

I was the only female in our lunch trailer, and nobody ever really said anything that was overly offensive, or whatever, like I don't really take things personally, and like I know, a lot of times when they do say something stupid, they're joking like it's nothing like serious, but I don't know I guess just like, listening to them, and like talking about like women, or like their girlfriends at home, or like I don't know it was a bunch of stuff like that, I'm just like, [facial expression of irritation] I think for a few days I eat my lunch in peace and quiet in the warehouse I was just like, I do not want to listen to these fucking guys right now. (Amanda)

Participants discussed the importance of disengaging in the social, and the emphasis on strict work focus as a way to divide female workers in terms of those who were successful versus less successful. Lynn, for instance, spoke about this in her comments about female colleagues who try to fit in with male colleagues,

Well, you talk about those women who kind of feel they have to fit in with those guys. Sometimes, they don't have a great work ethic. They'll spend more time out at the smoke pit and, you know, than actually working, and then it leaves the rest of us to pick up the slack on that, so it depends on the person. (Lynn).

Nicole’s comment about how some of her fellow female colleagues would “just go to work they do their job, they might have dinner with somebody, and they literally run to their rooms” reflects this avoidance coping strategy. Such avoidant strategies were also identified in a study of the experiences of female police officers (Haarr & Morash, 2013).

In some cases, female participants utilized cognitive strategies of reframing and downplaying sexism, often shifting the blame in cases of harassment to female workers.
experiencing the harassment. An example is the earlier comment from Caitriona that came directly after being asked about whether females feel comfortable reporting,

No, they're generally pretty good. Um, like I said there are going to be some women that um...they take things a little too far, so they want to entice, but then when the man, then all of a sudden. Yeah, so I always say dress professionally, you know don't, if you're going up there to look for certain things, you will find that. (Caitriona).

When talking about her experience of having to eat alone to avoid listening to offensive comments about women, Amanda immediately began downplaying the comments,

Yeah. And it's like, the thing is though like, you know...they'll say stupid shit, and they know it's stupid, and they're just being guys, and when guys get together they all say stupid shit, but I get the same thing when you get a bunch of girls get together, like maybe it's not stupid, but it's just like, you know, they talk about stuff, or say things they wouldn't generally say to anybody, or in public, or whatever, you're just with the same people all the time so you're really comfortable around these people. So, it was, I guess it was just like being around a bunch of girls. (Amanda)

In this scenario, the utterances from male colleagues that caused Amanda to sit and eat her lunch alone were downplayed in terms of both seriousness and severity, as well as with gender. Other examples of downplaying were indicated through references to the past and the changes that had taken place already, thereby lessening the severity of current forms of barriers or challenges.

5.6 Summary

This chapter began outlining the two key concepts guiding the critical discourse analysis conducted in this chapter, neoliberalism and hegemonic masculinity. This chapter answered the second research question, what strategies do female long-distance labour commuters employ to cope with the challenges they face in a turbulent, male dominated resource extraction industry?

The analysis of this chapter involved qualitative data procured through personal interviews with participants. Qualitative data was analyzed using principals of poststructural feminist geography for conducting a critical discourse analysis on the material and discursive practices utilized by female participants when discussing their experiences.
Findings included looking at the main barriers experienced by participants affected by values of neoliberalism such as, increased modes of individualism and competition, as well as hegemonic masculinities such as the gendered division of labour and judgments against female workers’ competence. This chapter also looked at ways female participants either rejected, resisted, reinforced, or reconciled tensions of their gender working in a male-dominated resource extraction industry. Lastly, this chapter identified the various coping strategies utilized by female participants in this study, which included: Invisibility through avoidance and/or disengagement, work exclusivity through working hard & proving abilities, and putting up with it: strength & endurance. In the following concluding chapter the answer to research question number three is addressed: What corporate and other recommendations can be implemented to improve the current experiences of women LDLC workers?
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Overview

In 2015, approximately 18,000 commuter workers travelled from Kelowna annually for work in resource extraction (Kelowna International Airport, 2015; Economic Impact Study, 2016). These figures reveal that far more people are commuting between Kelowna and Fort McMurray and other regions in Alberta for work than what was originally reported in 2014 by the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission at 5,000 (COEDC, 2014). These numbers do not include the number of individuals travelling by personal vehicles, on charter planes or busses, and/or taking connecting flights (non-direct) to Fort McMurray. Therefore, the number of workers commuting for work from Kelowna, and surrounding Central Okanagan Region to extraction sites located in Alberta, makes up a larger percentage of the local population. Yet, little is known about this growing army of workers. Even less is known about the women among them, who represent a growing minority of these mobile workers at 17.1 percent (RMWB, 2012d, p.1). Studies looking at the experiences of female workers are particularly limited, especially in the case of mobile workers. Currently, research that is situated spatially outside of the Atlantic Provinces is also limited.

Resource extraction industries continue to shape and impact the socio-political and economic fabric of Canada, playing a vital role in each on local, national, and international scales. Consequently, the impacts of resource extraction industries on workers, local residents, the environment, etc. are of great importance.

6.2 Research Findings

Female mobile workers were primarily driven by financial concerns to commute long distances and work in resource extraction. Each woman pointed to the lack of competitive wages
and benefits in the Okanagan area as the major reason for working outside of Kelowna and in Alberta’s resource extraction industries; seven of the nine indicated the high cost of living in the Okanagan as a primary reason. This combination creates the perfect storm of pressure, insecurity, and difficult compromises to ensure quality of life. These women feel forced to commute long distances beyond provincial borders for better-paid work and adequate incomes. This is consistent with financial data showing that the cost of living is high in Kelowna (Demographia, 2015; Kavcic, 2016b; Tencer, 2016); similar motivations for well-paid employment have driven workers in Newfoundland to commute long distance (Keough, 2012).

Barriers experienced by participants primarily resulted from the male-dominated reality and subsequent social culture within the resource extraction industry. Participatory perception of negative stereotypes of women working in resource extraction included: large women who are smokers and drinkers; incompetent and unable to do the job mentally, physically and in terms of their skill set; having to prove abilities and competence; women are the source of problems in the workplace due to the harassment and ostracization and sexual harassment they inspire; judgments against work ethic, uses body to get promoted; not good enough; most females do not last; only work for male attention; and lastly, cannot handle the demanding lifestyle physically or mentally. This list can be broken down into three overarching categories regarding female workers’ competence as per “not good enough” and “having to prove abilities”, appearance or personal characteristics as per “large” and “uses body to get promoted”, and the overall sexualization of women, which is underscored by sexual harassment incidents. The women engaged in various material and discursive practices to counter such stereotypes, to resist, reconcile, reinforce, or reject these tensions of gender. Findings from Miller (2004) support these findings in that women reconciled these tensions through efforts of conformity.
These stereotypes were evident from participant responses on questions directly asking them about experienced barriers. Their responses on barriers can be summarized as: single mother status, or motherhood in general in terms of child care; having a partner/spouse or family as a reason for diminished opportunities; lack of self-esteem or confidence working in a male-dominated world, along with limited resources for workplace readiness; “fair amount of harassment of all kinds”; stigma from pervasive stereotypes regarding work in remote places being reserved for men (males); lack of opportunities for female workers; and the intersectional issue of being a woman with a disability. Barriers regarding motherhood have been identified by previous research on women in resources extraction and/or long distance labour commuting (Costa et al., 2006). Previous studies have also identified family and/or partners as a reason for women to leave this work (Ranson, 2005), and gender-based stigma against women working in remote places (McLeod & Hovorka, 2008; Miller, 2004; Teske & Beedle, 2001).

The study participants’ hypothetical advice to prepare other women for working in similar circumstances focused on ways to counter the negative stereotypes and barriers they experienced. Again, these can be summarized as: the need to have strong skills and self-esteem; to exhibit ‘high morals’ by maintaining “ladylike” behaviour, which was defined as refraining from using profanity or being sexually active with co-workers, and by dressing modestly; and to expect to deal with long hours and loneliness.

The male-dominated culture evident in remote resource extraction industries reinforces the spatial importance of research on gender, as well as illustrating the many barriers for women that stem directly from hegemonic perceptions of gender. The survey findings outlined important experiences that disadvantaged women who engage in resource extraction work. When combined with analysis of data from the interviews and interpreted from a critical epistemological stance,
these findings reveal broader social and systemic dynamics, as well as material and discursive practices involved in co-creating, or re-producing these tensions of gender. In answer to the first research question, the major factors affecting the overall experiences of female mobile workers are first tied to their motivations to find adequate and competitive wages that sustain the opportunity to live with the increased cost of living. Additionally, their experiences are affected by factors specific to gender in terms of stereotypes predicated on existing hegemonic values.

Another key finding of this study was the ways in which discourses of neoliberal ideology and hegemonic masculinities influenced the perceptions of participants’ experience, and the way participants reconciled existing tensions of gender in resource extraction. Through an analysis of participant interviews, themes emerged regarding how intrinsic neoliberal values affect the material and discursive practices of participants relative to their work experience in resource extraction. These values exist on systemic and structural, as well as on policy, levels that are imbued within the culture of resource extraction, which have particular marginalizing effects on female workers. For instance, neoliberal individualism, high levels of competition, and precarious employment all affect access and opportunities for female mobile workers due to a gendered division of labour that delineates female workers into labour segments associated with the social reproduction of labour. Female workers in the primary sectors of resource extraction faced constant disparaging judgments about their knowledge and competence. This reality pervaded even in cases where participants held higher-ranking jobs and had several years of experience.

One main finding was that women simultaneously experienced and reinforced marginalization at work through stereotypes of hegemonic masculinities. This was evident in various incidents that the women described, including when female colleagues were bullied,
especially those women who were more successful or had opportunities for success in the workplace. Other examples include times when female colleagues hoarded information to maintain a competitive edge. The individualism and precarious labour inherent in the industry increased competition among workers. This may have played a role in the tendency of study participants to express negative perceptions about female workers, for instance, when discussing colleagues’ motivation to get involved in resource extraction work as a way to meet men or start a relationship. This perception regarding female workers’ motivation to get into resource extraction work was indicated in participants’ answers to the questionnaire, and reflects a common stereotype about female workers. Thus, while participants acknowledged the existence of negative, sexist stereotypes, they also reinforced these stereotypes with respect to their perceptions of their fellow female colleagues. These co-produced stereotypes of females in resource extraction create tensions for workers when they do not fit the stereotype. The women in this study reconciled these tensions through various coping strategies, including making an exception of themselves relative to other female workers. Previous studies have shown that male workers also make an exception of female workers in resource extraction as an oddity relative to females outside of resource extraction (Miller, 2004; Reed, 2004). As a result, hegemonic gender stereotypes are reinforced and continue to marginalize females in the industry.

The continued male dominance inherent within resource extraction exists partly due to historic perceptions of resource extraction through values of hegemonic masculinities. These dominant discourses create tensions for female workers in the industry, tensions that treat females as an oddity, or as not belonging. These tensions are re-produced by female colleagues through practices aimed at reconciling tensions. One way this reinforcement takes place is reflected in participants’ comments that they prefer working with men because women are “catty
and bitchy”. Thus, some females within the industry seek to maintain the status quo. These findings build on those from other studies, such as Reed, (2004) which found that female workers conform to a male-dominated work culture through practices of assimilation.

For the most part, the study participants did not challenge the practices that marginalize women in resource extraction worksites, or the structures that separates work and family spheres. These structures, both social and systemic, are also maintained by the lack of family-friendly policies. A culture of individualism, and uncritical acceptance of neoliberal views of market dominance and separate spheres, diminishes employment opportunities for women with families and children in ways that do not extend in the same way to male colleagues, maintaining the former’s minority status.

The overall sexualization of female workers is another barrier affecting female workers. This barrier was evident in discussions on women’s motivation to get involved in resource extraction. However, barriers involving the overall sexualization of females are experienced in plural ways. These include perceptions of innocuous interactions with male colleagues, female colleagues’ appearance and dress, and discourses of slut-shaming and victim-blaming. The participants resisted these stereotypes in two ways, by conforming to either feminine or masculine roles, for instance, distinguishing the ‘sort’ of women who work in administrative roles or traditional female work such as cooking versus females that work on extraction sites. This division consequently reinforces a sense of traditional masculine and feminine roles that are consistent with hegemonic masculinities.

The barriers experienced by female workers were experienced through social interactions, influenced by neoliberal ideologies that promote precarious labour and individualism, and through discourses reflecting hegemonic masculinities. These discourses and
material practices exist on all levels—social, systemic, and policy—to create particular marginalizing effects for female workers, including diminished opportunities to access work, constant judgments against their competence, and evaluations of gender through the sexualization of females.

The study participants coped primarily through efforts to reconcile gender-related tensions in resource extraction work. They rejected negative stereotypes regarding themselves, exempting themselves from stereotypical portrayals, but not necessarily with respect to their fellow female colleagues. Their reconciliation involved making an exception of themselves while simultaneously reinforcing these stereotypes in order to fit in and succeed in the male-dominated workplace. Common coping strategies utilized by participants included Invisibility through Avoidance and/or Disengagement, Work Exclusivity Through Working Hard & Proving Abilities, and Putting Up With It: Strength & Endurance [sic].

Based on these finding, amendments are required on corporate and social levels to achieve transformative change that challenges these marginalizing norms. Some of these changes need to occur in the form of corporate and policy recommendations.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings and the suggestions offered by participants, a number of recommendations could be implemented to improve experiences for female workers and that can have a long-term transformative affect. These recommendations have both practical applications as well as those operating on a broad systemic level.

The first involves inclusivity for women with children and families. This recommendation has been made in previous studies (Eftimie, Heller, & Strongman, 2009; Ranson, 2005). However, more efforts need to be directed at inclusive family policies that would
improve female workers access to and retention within resource extraction. An example of such a policy would be having greater work flexibility in case of sudden family emergencies to leave during a rotation, more flexibility around opportunities to communicate home during work hours (phone, text, skype, etc.). These types of policies have been successfully implemented in Australia by mining companies (Misan & Rudnik, 2015). Additionally, the inclusion of policies and practices which, to reiterate (Eftimie, Heller, & Strongman, 2009), are aimed at allocating more resources and subsequently improving infrastructure in ways that “lessen domestic burdens and improve access to markets” (Eftimie, Heller, & Strongman, 2009). Such examples can include the introduction of broad government family friendly policies such as subsidized day care with extended hours, and assurance of job security after parental leave just to name two. Also, important is the need for onsite programs (as part of training orientations) that promote inclusive attitudes, and provide critical identification of implicit and explicit discrimination or hegemonic gender roles. A further recommendation is for work sites to provide avenues for human rights complaints in cases of harassment and/or other forms of discrimination. Lastly, to include harassment management into curriculums of study in disciplines such as engineering, and into trades programs. Values of hegemonic masculinities continue to create barriers that maintain gendered divisions of labour, that work to exclude certain demographics of female workers such as mothers, young women planning on having children, and women with partners. The study participants pointed out how these realities limit women’s access and opportunities in resource extraction work, not through overt restrictions, but rather through a work culture that makes having children or a family incongruent with the demands of long-distance work and work in remote resource extraction industries, and the lack of efforts to accommodate women’s bodies, social needs, and personal safety.
Acceptance of the notion of separate spheres means that the barriers that women experience do not extend to male workers in the same way, that is, through existing standards of hegemonic ideologies which continue to allocate child and family care (labour segmented into the private sphere of the home, and labour constituting the social reproduction of labour) primarily with feminine roles. Therefore, while policies are currently in place for parental leave, there is a lack of additional policies that ameliorate the indirect consequences of other existing policies, such as those promoting increases in individualism.

Another recommendation is the need to have opportunities for effective, potentially anonymous reporting of discriminatory incidents. Many participants indicated that there was little to no recourse when it came to reporting harassment or other negative experiences, particularly because there was no guarantee of anonymity. This results in underreporting of such incidents, especially in cases considered not “serious” enough. Registering complaints is also discouraged by prevalent stereotypes about female workers as being troublemakers. While most of the women had positive experiences with male colleagues, almost all of them listed at least one incident that had not been reported or was reported but not satisfactorily handled, that is, with little assistance/recourse provided. Implementation of a system for anonymous reporting is required, with clear procedures and responsible officials who are located in proximity to workers in remote sites (not in downtown Calgary for instance), so that individuals feel comfortable going and reporting, and the service is accessible.

In addition, there is a need for continued efforts to increase the diversity of workers such that more women (and other minority groups) are hired. While the mere presence of women in the field is insufficient to garner changes to current existing barriers, having more women represented in supervisory and leadership roles can greatly buffer some of these divides. The
effect of this is a leveling out regarding the distribution of power both in terms of gender and allocation of roles.

Another consideration or recommendation is to provide more social support for female workers. Supports can include having more opportunities for females to interact with other female workers, which can reduce social coercion such as bullying. Other supports include, mentoring programs paring experienced and novice female workers together, inclusion of programs that address issues of traditional gender roles and stereotypes (Eftimie, Heller, & Strongman, 2009). These supports connect directly to having more female workers overall, and in higher ranking, leadership roles. More direct social support would involve opportunities for more interactions among workers, such as barbeques and lunch. Most participants discussed having working lunches, or skipping lunch due to work intensification. These types of interactions may foster a greater sense of community and consequentially mitigate challenges associated with neoliberal individualism identified by participants. Greater social supports and interactions have been identified as increasing positive associations with work in resource extraction and long-distance commuting (Misan & Rudnik, 2015), and by a study on female police officers facing workplace harassment (Brown, 2015).

On a broader level, discourses on remote resource extraction work and long-distance commuting require reframing in ways that are more gender inclusive. While currently many ad campaigns have run to shift antiquated perceptions of the resource extraction industry (Dorow, 2015), more work is required in this area. These shifts in discourse also need to be undertaken on a broad social and systemic level extending beyond resource extraction. Additionally, there is the need for wider organizational and structural and climate change in terms of diversity and inclusivity (Veldman et al., 2017). While current debates on childrearing and aging populations
dominate many discussions of about gender and labour, the ways in which policies and systemic structures are amended need to account for overall shifts in labour demographics to be more inclusive of the growing female workforce. These policies can have a tremendous impact on female workers, as well as relieve issues related to an aging population, currently an issue across Canada. Future policies must supersede existing neoliberal ideologies and hegemonic gendered values that underlie current exclusive policies that maintain gendered divisions of labour. The substantial gender gap inherent in resource extraction is a billowing example of these values and subsequent consequences that marginalize female workers and have broader consequences.

Some examples of ways these recommendations can take on further practical applications will be discussed. One example is dedicating companies through an incentive program conducted utilizing Participatory Action Research (Flicker, Travers, Guta, McDonald, & Meagher, 2007). This approach promotes active engagement fosters authentic collaborations between companies and academics aimed at, in this case, achieving corporate ethical mandates and initiatives. This collaboration would mitigate against unilateral interventions, while promoting “a more inclusive and democratic process” in decision making (Flicker, Travers, Guta, McDonald, & Meagher, 2007, p. 478). Processes can involve the following steps, an initial evaluation of current worker conditions/experiences, reporting of findings demonstrating achievements and identify areas that require more attention, program creation to improve existing limitations, and a final phase involving an overall program evaluation. Projects conducted from this approach have multiple benefits to all partners such as, fostering improvements for workers, creating real emancipatory change for any marginalized groups such as female LDLCs, while additionally creating opportunities to contribute to this important scholarship. Lastly, companies may be incentivized through improving conditions for their workers, and being an example company regarding
meeting social responsibility initiatives and ethical mandates. Outcomes from such a program may be transferable to other workplaces. Currently, there is a greater recognition regarding the existence of social injustice in the form of sexism, discrimination, and sexual misconduct against women in the workplace (Jones, Arena, Nittruter, Alonso, & Lindsey, 2017; Rader, Larson, McKay, & Moss, 2016; Heilman, & Caleo, 2015). The need for transformative change is undeniable and as such, cannot be ignored.

An additional, equally important practical application of the recommendations involve changing the workplace culture. This can involve occupational strategies to build and promote solidarity among workers, and resist individualism. Some of the ways this can be achieved is by increasing opportunities and activities for social interaction, create more shared communal spaces for example having a lounge with hydration & snack stations available in every work trailer. Women from this study identified a need for more opportunities to interact with female colleagues. One paramount way to achieve this is to increase the number of women workers. Lastly, to address changing broader attitudes on gender in resource extraction education is a key. One way to accomplish this may be to include information on harassment and other issues in the oil sand safety awareness & daily field level hazard assessment forms (FLHA) and meetings. This can be carried out and supported by the health, safety & environment supervisor(s), can take no more than a couple minutes each day, should involve identifying issues and acting/finding strategies to improve or ameliorate problems identified, and finally can provide information on protection from harassment (and other violations) and provisions in the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Improvements in occupational spaces, and non-occupational spaces, are necessary when it comes to facing and effectively changing issues of marginalization. Holistic approaches that
account for the plurality of experiences are vital to this type of change. Efforts to overcome existing issues of social and systemic injustice continue to be pertinent in contemporary times and require concerted attention. This research and the above recommendations are a call to such action.

6.4 Areas for Future Research

This study’s objective was to fill knowledge gaps regarding the experiences of female long-distance labour commuters situated spatially in one of Canada’s fastest growing mid-sized cities, Kelowna, British Columbia. This spatial context permitted an investigation into female mobile workers’ experiences outside of the Atlantic Provinces of Canada, which have received the predominance of attention. This study has identified some direct and indirect factors affecting the overall experiences of female mobile workers including barriers and challenges experienced. These factors involve aspects from both the home and work communities. This study also examined coping strategies utilized by participants through an analysis of participants’ practices to resist, reject, reconcile, or reinforce tensions of gender with resource extraction work. Taking into account the limitations of this study, such as lack of generalizability due to a small sample size and a lack of diversity among the sample of participants, this study identifies several avenues for future research. These include:

- A critical study accounting for intersectionalities of race and ethnicity on the experiences of female mobile workers.
- A critical study looking at the experiences of Indigenous female, and male workers in resource extraction.
• An empirical study analyzing the socio-demographics of resource extraction workers and long-distance labour commuters to resource extraction industries, accounting for spatial contexts, such as sending areas.

• A cross-sectional study of geographic differences on the experiences of female LDLC workers in resource extraction

• An exploratory study analyzing the impacts from turbulent oil industry downturns on gender and labour in resource extraction industries in Canada, and on worker resilience.

• A qualitative study investigating identity formulations/constructions from female mobile workers in resource extraction to further investigate how female mobile workers reconcile existing tensions of gender with remote resource extraction work and long-distance commuting.
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix A: Map of Central Okanagan Regional District

Appendix B: Map of Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, Alberta

Source: http://www.rmwb.ca/living/Communities.html
Appendix C: 5 Electoral Districts in The Okanagan

Five Electoral Districts in The Okanagan

Okanagan-Shuswap
- Salmon Arm
- Vernon
- Cold Stream
- Lumby
- Armstrong
- Grand Forks
- Trail
- Rossland
- Warfield
- Montrose
- Fruitvale
- Castlegar

Okanagan-Coquilnalla
- Penticton
- Merritt
- Summerland
- Logan Lake
- West Kelowna
- Peachland
- Nelson
- Salmo
- Slocan
- New Denver
- Silverton
- Kaslo

British Columbia Southern Interior
- Princetown
- Keremeos
- Oliver
- Osoyoos
- Greenwood

Kelowna-Lake Country
- Kelowna
- Lake Country
- Central Okanagan

Appendix D: List of Oil Camps

Researcher received this map from a private email.
Appendix E: Questionnaire Survey

Female Mobile Workers from The Okanagan to Alberta's Resource Extraction Industry
https://survey.ubc.ca/surveys/37-59417a8a9f97d2a12c7f04db926/female-mobile-workers-from-kelowna-to-oil-sands-1/c1645b497e5cb595fda715537672d36355fb6d22/

Please read the cover letter and choose if you would like to proceed.

This questionnaire has been designed for the purpose of assessing the workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters (mobile workers), to resource extraction job projects located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (particularly in Fort McMurray), who reside in one of the 5 electoral districts in The Okanagan (see consent form for list of eligible cities). The questionnaire is being conducted by Stephanie Nagy as part of her Masters Thesis under the supervision of Dr. Carlos Teixeira.

This study aims to examine the challenges and barriers that female LDLCs face both with long-distance commuting and with working in the Oil Sands. If you agree to participate, we anticipate that it will take about 45 minutes of your time to complete the survey. If you wish to have the results of the final study, you may indicate on the last page of this survey your interest along with an email address where the results can be sent. Also, you can find the results of the study in Stephanie Nagy’s thesis once it is published online on cIRcle.

We do not believe that your participation in this study is likely to create any significant risks for you but you should be sure you understand the nature of the questions before you agree to participate. We do not ask you to identify yourself by name but we ask you to identify your age, and home community, and we ask your opinion on various aspects of being a long-distance labour commuter to resource extraction job projects.

Your participation in this survey means that your voice will be heard on issues that may be important to you regarding the availability of future services provided to female mobile workers in Alberta's Oil Sands. Please be assured that all the information you provide is highly confidential.

The data will be recorded, analyzed, and reported in ways that guarantee anonymity. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point with no consequences. This online questionnaire survey is compliant with the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).

This online questionnaire is administered by the UBC-hosted version of FluidSurveys/Survey Monkey. All data will be stored and backed up in Canada As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive a coffee card from a local coffee shop of your choice worth 10 dollars. If the questionnaire is completed, it is assumed that your consent has been given.

Please refer to the following link to print a copy of the "questionnaire survey consent form" to have for your own records./media/assets/user/18473/storage/Updated%20Consent%20Form%20Q%20and%20A.pdf If you have any further questions or would like more information about this study you may contact the research project supervisor, Dr. Carlos Teixeira, by telephone (250-807-9313) or email (carlos.teixeira@ubc.ca), or the co-investigator, Stephanie Nagy by phone (250-808-6784) or email (stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca). If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the UBC Okanagan Research Services Office at 250-807-8832, or by e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Screening Questions for Participant Eligibility

Please answer the following 5 screening questions to determine your eligibility for this study. If your answer to any of the previous questions was "NO", you will not be eligible to participate in this study, please DO NOT continue. If your answer to ALL of the previous questions was "YES", you are invited to take part in this survey and share with me your experiences with long-distance labour commuting to work in Fort McMurray's Resource Extraction Projects.

1. Are you a Canadian citizen, or have a permanent residence status?
2. Are you a female who works/ed* for a (RMWB) Fort McMurray oil company?
   * If you have been laid off, you ARE still eligible to participate in this study.
3. Are you a long-distance labour commuter (mobile worker)?
4. Are you a resident of one of the 5 electoral districts in The Okanagan, British Columbia?
5. Are you 19 years or older?
6. Are you English proficient?
7. When did you start long-distance labour commuting (e.g. June 2015)?

**Transition: Entry Into Oil Sands & Work History**
I would like to begin by asking you a couple of questions about how you got involved with long-distance commuting for work in the Oil Sands in Fort McMurray.

8. Were your parents involved in this type of work (oil sands/ resource extraction; LDLC)?
9. Do you have any other family members involved in this type of work (oil sands/ resource extraction; LDLC)?
10. How did you get involved with LDLC to work in Alberta's resource extraction industry?
11. One issue identified in the current literature on female resource extraction workers as being a major problem for resource extraction companies is attracting and retaining skilled female workers. What attracted you to this work?
12. What is your current job title?
13. Why did you choose to work as a mobile worker in the Alberta Oil Sands? (Check all that apply)
14. Overall, please rate the importance of factors behind the decision to work as a mobile worker in Alberta's Oil Sands?
   I am looking for an overall summary, on the following 5-point scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Overall, please rate the importance of factors behind the decision to work as a mobile worker in Alberta's Oil Sands?</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Overall, please rate the importance of factors behind the decision to work as a mobile worker in Alberta's Oil Sands?</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyment or Personal Fulfilment From Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Overall, please rate the importance of factors behind the decision to work as a mobile worker in Alberta's Oil Sands?</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Overall, please rate the importance of factors behind the decision to work as a mobile worker in Alberta's Oil Sands?</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would like to spend a brief moment asking you about your experience with long-distance labour commuting (LDLC).

15. What is your main mode of transportation when long-distance labour commuting?
16. How often would you say on average do you commute in a year? Please circle the most accurate response.
17. During the time that you are working in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo area (Fort McMurray) where do you reside?
18. Did you experience any difficulties finding housing/accommodations in Fort McMurray?
   If you answer YES go to next question...If you answer NO Skip next question, go to question 19.
19. If you answered YES to question 18, please describe the difficulties that you've encountered when looking for housing/accommodations in Fort McMurray.

**Experiences with Home & Work Communities**
At this time, I would like to ask you some questions about both, your home community-Kelowna, and your work community-Fort McMurray.

20. What do you like about living in the Okanagan (what reasons did you have for not moving to (RMWB) Fort McMurray, Alberta)?
   (No response)
21. What are some of the negative aspects about living in your community (in the Okanagan)?
   (No response)
22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision.

22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision. | Competitive Wages/Benefits

22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision. | Limited Work Hours/Seasonal or Part Time Work

22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision. | Cost of Living in The Okanagan

22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision. | Housing Affordability

22. The Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission (COEDC) found employers in the Okanagan indicated that their biggest challenge for retaining employees was their inability to provide competitive wages and/or benefits when compared to other regions. How much does the current economic outlook in the Okanagan affect your decision to LDLC to Fort McMurray, Alberta? Rate the level of influence factors outlined by the COEDC had on your decision. | Low Demand Occupations

23. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your overall quality of life?

24. Overall, how would you rate your sense of community in Fort McMurray?

Details on Work Culture in Alberta's Oil Sands

At this point, I would like to ask you some questions about the work culture in the oil sands.

25. Resource extraction jobs/industries are often viewed as being very male dominated. How do you feel about this perception?

26. If you view resource extraction jobs/industries as male dominated, how do you see yourself fitting in?

27. Do you think there are any existing stereotypes about female mobile workers in resource extraction? (No response)

28. What would you say are the TOP THREE stereotypes about female mobile workers in resource extraction? Please rank them in order of importance.

29. Overall, would you say that you work with a diverse group of people (ethnicity, race, gender, etc.)?

Gender and Mobile Work in Resource Extraction

In the following section, I will ask questions concerned specifically with gendered experiences working in the oil sands.
30. Have you experienced, or know someone (in this case only female) personally who has experienced any sexual harassment (cat calls, touching, gesturing, name calling, etc.) or discrimination while working in Alberta's Oil Sands?
31. Would you recommend this lifestyle (mobile worker) to other women?
32. What advice would you give to any women thinking about working as a mobile worker in resource extraction?
33. Have you received, or do you know a female worker who has received a promotion?
34. Would you say there are a lot of opportunities for advancement in your job as a female?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34. Would you say there are a lot of opportunities for advancement in your job as a female?</td>
<td>Lots of opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Would you say there are a lot of opportunities for advancement in your job as a female?</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. If your answer was NO to question 35, why do you think that there are NOT the same opportunities available to men and women in your field with respect to employment and career advancement? Please explain your answer.</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Overall, how important, if at all, is gender equality as an issue in your industry?</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. One reason the oil sands have been viewed as being male dominated is due to women not always being viewed as having a place in engineering and resource extraction. Overall in your experience, have you seen any changes in the perception of female workers in the oilsands? Please rank the level of change in general perceptions of female workers on the following 5-point scale.</td>
<td>Level of Change in General Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. It has been said that motherhood and engineering/resource extraction work DO NOT go hand in hand due to a lack of sufficient child care support for oil workers, thereby, making long-distance commuting or being a mother a huge barrier. In your experience how accurate is this viewpoint? Please rank the level of accuracy of this viewpoint on the following 5-point scale.</td>
<td>Level of Accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. What would you say the TOP THREE existing workplace &amp; commuting barriers are for female long-distance workers? Please rank them in order of importance.</td>
<td>1.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. What is the main source of communication that you utilize to contact your family when away working?</td>
<td>Phone &amp; Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. What is the main source of communication that you utilize to contact your family when away working?</td>
<td>Skype/Face Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. What is the main source of communication that you utilize to contact your family when away working?</td>
<td>Emails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
41. What is the main source of communication that you utilize to contact your family when away working? | Written Letters  
(No response)  
41. What is the main source of communication that you utilize to contact your family when away working? | Social Media (Snapchat, Periscopse, etc.)  
(No response)  
42. Do you have any children?  
If your response is "YES" answer questions 43 & 44...If your Response is "NO" skip ahead to question 45.  
43. Overall, how, if at all, does your mobile work affect your child/children?  
**Variable** | **Response**  
--- | ---  
44. Overall, how, if at all, does your mobile work affect your child/children? | Positively  
(No response)  
44. Overall, how, if at all, does your mobile work affect your child/children? | Negatively  
(No response)  
45. Are you the breadwinner of your family?  
46. Do you have any financial concerns for yourself or your family?  
47. If you have a spouse/significant other, do you feel family and household responsibilities are shared fairly between you and your partner?  
**Variable** | **Response**  
--- | ---  
47. If you have a spouse/significant other, do you feel family and household responsibilities are shared fairly between you and your partner? | Shared Fairly  
(No response)  
48. Overall, how would you rate your current work/life balance?  
**Variable** | **Response**  
--- | ---  
48. Overall, how would you rate your current work/life balance? | Work Life Balance  
(No response)  
49. Has living and working away from your main social support networks affected your overall wellbeing? Please rate the level at which, if at all, being away from your main social support networks affected the following areas in your life.  
**Variable** | **Response**  
--- | ---  
49. Has living and working away from your main social support networks affected your overall wellbeing? Please rate the level at which, if at all, being away from your main social support networks affected the following areas in your life. | Mental Health  
(No response)  
49. Has living and working away from your main social support networks affected your overall wellbeing? Please rate the level at which, if at all, being away from your main social support networks affected the following areas in your life. | Physical Health  
(No response)  
49. Has living and working away from your main social support networks affected your overall wellbeing? Please rate the level at which, if at all, being away from your main social support networks affected the following areas in your life. | Relationships  
(No response)  
49. Has living and working away from your main social support networks affected your overall wellbeing? Please rate the level at which, if at all, being away from your main social support networks affected the following areas in your life. | Personal Values  
(No response)  
50. Has living and working away from your main social support networks affected your overall wellbeing? Please rate the level at which, if at all, being away from your main social support networks affected the following areas in your life. | How You View Yourself  
(No response)  
50. What would you say are the TOP THREE coping strategies that you utilize to deal with any barriers you face when long-distance commuting to work in Alberta’s Oil Sands? Please rank them in order of importance.  
**Variable** | **Response**  
--- | ---  
50. What would you say are the TOP THREE coping strategies that you utilize to deal with any barriers you face when long-distance commuting to work in Alberta’s Oil Sands? Please rank them in order of importance. | 1.)  
(No response)  
50. What would you say are the TOP THREE coping strategies that you utilize to deal with any barriers you face when long-distance commuting to work in Alberta’s Oil Sands? Please rank them in order of importance. | 2.)  
(No response)  
50. What would you say are the TOP THREE coping strategies that you utilize to deal with any barriers you face when long-distance commuting to work in Alberta’s Oil Sands? Please rank them in order of importance. | 3.)  
(No response)  
51. What do you perceive as being the MOST stressful part of working as a mobile worker in the Alberta Oil Sands? Circle all that apply.
52. Overall, How much stress do the following factors associated with working as a mobile worker in the Alberta Oil Sands cause you. Please Rate the listed factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extended Time Away</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Hour Days</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Demand</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Male Dominated Job</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Personal Services</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Government & Non-government Services**

In this next section I will ask a few questions related specifically to available services in both Kelowna and Fort McMurray.

53. Is there a GOVERNMENT, or NON-GOVERNMENT organization or group focused on the needs of workers in the Alberta Oil Sands whose services you have utilized at least once?
   If your response is "YES" answer questions 54-57...If your response "NO" skip ahead to question 58.
54. If your answer to question 53 was YES, what has been the most helpful service?
55. Would you recommend this service[s] to others?
56. How did you learn about this organization or group?
57. If you have utilized services from either a governmental or non-governmental organization or group, please rate your level of satisfaction with the services you have received.
58. Are you aware of any available services for female mobile workers in Alberta’s Oil Sands offered by your current company/organization?
59. What services offered specifically for female mobile workers would you like to see made available in the future from your company/organization?
60. What government OR other public policies would you like to see implemented to support female mobile workers to resource extraction jobs in the future?

**Recent Economic Downturn on Resource Extraction**

In this brief section, I will ask you a few questions related to the recent economic downturn that Canada has experienced.

61. Quite recently, the economy shifted from boom to bust in a short period of time. How has the recent economic downturn affected you? Please rate the following areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Life</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Family's Life</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How you Think about Your Job</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Mental Health</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Physical Health</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Finances/Savings</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Relationships</td>
<td>(No response)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
62. Do you think the current economic downturn/bust has affected women and men in the SAME way in your workplace/community?
63. What would you like to see improved that would motivate you to stay with your current company longer than your current plan?
64. What are you most proud of with respect to your career as a mobile worker in Alberta’s Oil Sands?

**Final Demographic Questions about The Respondent**
I now have just a few final questions to end off with. Your answers here will help us understand your previous answers better and help us compare your experience with other female mobile workers to resource extraction projects like you.

65. What is your current marital status? (Fill in only one)
66. In what year were you born?
67. What is your highest level of educational attainment?
68. Finally, I’d like to think about your total household income for the past year. Could you please tell me which of these broad categories it falls into?
69. Do you have any questions or comments about the survey?

As part of this research, some individuals may be invited to participate in a follow-up, face to face interview. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. You may be contacted to participate in this interview. During the interview you will be asked to provide the researcher with some more information about your experience long-distance commuting from Kelowna to resource extraction projects in Fort McMurray. Your participation in this interview is VOLUNTARY and your decision to participate, or not to participate, will have NO effect on yourself or your professional standing at your place of employment. You can refuse to answer any question, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time without explanation. No information will ever be released that would disclose your personal identity at any point. You will receive an additional $10 gift coffee card as a token of appreciation for your participation in the interview.

My signature indicates that I CONSENT to be contacted to be invited to participate in the follow-up interview. Please sign your name with your computer mouse on the given line. Signature of Participant.

If you would like a copy of the results of this research study please leave an email address where you can be reached below.

END...THANK YOU
Research Questions/Themes

The primary questions themes are:

(a) General factors affecting overall experience/ quality of life as a result of being a mobile worker to male-dominated resource extraction job projects in Northern Alberta, from Kelowna, British Columbia?

(b) What strategies are women/you using to cope with any challenging factors faced in the male dominated resource extraction industry in Alberta and in the demanding mobile worker lifestyle?

(c) What recommendations do you have for other women, as well as recommendations for oil companies hiring female long distance labour commuters, and lastly, for local governments.

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to meet with me, and for your participation in this second phase of research. I am very interested in learning more about what it is like to work in the Alberta Oil Sands and long-distance commute to work regularly. I would like to begin with a little background on your work experience.

Interview Guide Questions:

(1) When did you begin working as a mobile worker in the Alberta Oil Sands?
   a. What is your job title?
   b. Tell me a little bit about what you do?
   c. Why did you choose this career?
(2) What were some of the factors influencing your/or your family’s decision to long-distance commute to work?
   a. What motivated you to work in the Alberta Oil Sands?
      i. Financial reasons
      ii. Skills training/opportunities
      iii. Fulfillment

(3) What were some of the factors behind your choice to continue to live in Kelowna, as oppose to relocating to Fort McMurray (RMWB)?
   a. Why did you choose to continue to live in Kelowna?
   b. Tell me about finding work in Kelowna?
   c. What are some biggest challenges with living in Kelowna?

(4) Tell me about your first experiences working and living away from home?
   a. What was going through your head?
   b. What were your main concerns?
   c. What were you most excited about/ looking forward to?
   d. What was the biggest adjustment?

(5) What do you think about the work culture in the oil sands?
   a. Do you think that the mainstream perceptions are accurate? How do you feel about them?
   b. Do people generally get along on and off the field?
   c. How do you find working in a male dominated industry?
   d. Are there any challenges would you say with being a woman in a male-dominated industry? Tell me about them.
      i. What do you think the biggest existing challenge is for women workers/commuters?
   e. Do feel respected?

(6) Do you feel that you fit in as one of the guys?

(7) Have the men on the job said or done anything that made you feel uncomfortable?

(8) Do you have any safety concerns at work or with commuting?

(9) Can you tell me some of the benefits of long-distance commuting?

(10) Are you a parent?
    a. How many children do you have? How old is/are your child/children?
    b. How is it for you being a parent while long-distance commuting?
    c. How is your family coping?
    d. What are your main concerns for your family?

(11) What advice do you have for women thinking about long-distance commuting and/or working in Alberta’s oil industry?

(12) How do you think the recent economic recession has impacted you and other [female] workers in the oil industry?

(13) What strategies are you using to cope with the challenges/barriers you face?
    a. What types of resources would help you to cope better?

(14) Are you aware of any services available to support workers?
    a. Do you find them helpful at all?
    b. Are there more services in Kelowna or Alberta for workers?
(15) What recommendations would you suggest for oil companies to implement regarding providing support for [female] workers?

(16) What recommendations would you suggest for local governments and policy makers to implement regarding providing support for [female] workers?

(17) Do you have any other thoughts or comments that you would like to add regarding your experience with long-distance commuting to Alberta’s oil sands?
Appendix G: Initial Contact Letter Organizations

Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, Canada, V1V 1V7

November, 2015

Initial Contact Letter and Screening for Eligibility-Organizations Research Project:
Workplace Experiences of Female Mobile Workers from Kelowna CMA to Resource Extraction Job Projects in Fort McMurray, Alberta

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Stephanie Nagy. I am currently enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Master’s program at the University of British Columbia - Okanagan. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research study involving female mobile workers from the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna to resource extraction job projects located in the Service Area of Fort McMurray (RMWB), Alberta. This research study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. C. Teixeira (University of British Columbia Okanagan).

The objective of this study is to examine the workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to Alberta’s resource extraction job projects. Currently, there is very little data published on the topic of female mobile workers in resource extraction industries, especially from those commuting from small or mid-sized cities such as those located in the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna. This study will explore the different factors that impact the overall workplace and commuting experiences of female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects, along with the barriers and challenges female mobile workers have working in a heavily male-dominated industry. The study also seeks to explore the coping strategies female mobile workers use to overcome these. Lastly, this study will focus on the possible implementation of future services to help female mobile workers to resource extraction jobs projects. The results of this study will be used to provide policy makers and resource extraction companies with recommendations for achieving improved quality of life for female mobile workers.

The reason for my writing this letter is to ask for your help with regard to recommending eligible participants for this study, distributing a recruitment poster, and passing along information on the opportunity to participate in this study to any female mobile worker who fits the inclusion criteria listed below. Your help will be greatly appreciated. The results from this research study can potentially create future, corporate and policy changes that will benefit female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects commuting between Kelowna CMA and Fort McMurray.

Participants will be asked to complete a 45-minute questionnaire survey (they have a choice of, either completing the survey online, or in a hard copy format), and may also be called for a follow-up interview lasting 45 minutes total. Each participant will receive a $10 coffee card as a token of appreciation for participating in the survey. Participants who will be selected for the
follow-up interview will receive an additional $10 coffee card as a token of appreciation for participating in the interview.

Please fill out the items on this page and send them to me at stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca, or call me at: 250-808-6784 and I can collect it from you.

Screening Questions for Potential Participants:

1. Are you a Canadian citizen, or have a permanent residences status? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Are you a female who works for a (RMWB) Fort McMurray, Alberta oil/resource extraction company? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Are you a long-distance labour commuter (mobile worker)? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Are you a resident of the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna, British Columbia? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Do you speak English? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Are you age 19 years or older? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. When did you start long-distance labour commuting (e.g. 20/06/12)? __/__/__

If your answer to any of the previous questions was “NO”, you will not be eligible to participate in this study, please do not continue.

If your answer to all of the previous questions was “YES”, you are invited to take part in this survey and share with me your experiences with long-distance labour commuting to work in Fort McMurray’s Resource Extraction Projects.

Thank you.

Please indicate which way you would like to fill out the questionnaire survey?

☐ Online ☐ Hard Copy

Please provide me with your contact information below, to receive more details about this study, and a recruitment poster, consent form, and the survey (online address or hard copy) will be sent to you.

Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:
Appendix H: Questionnaire Survey Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC Canada V1V 1V7

Questionnaire Survey Consent Form
Research Project:
Workplace Experiences of Female Mobile Workers from the Okanagan to Resource Extraction Job Projects in Alberta

Principal Investigator: Carlos Teixeira, Professor, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Irving K. Barber School of the Arts and Sciences, 1147 Research Road, Arts 268, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, V1V 1V7, Tel. 250-807-9313; email: carlos.teixeira@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: Stephanie M. Nagy, Graduate Student, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Irving K. Barber School of the Arts and Sciences, 1147 Research Road, Arts 384, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, V1V 1V7, Tel. 250-808-6784; email: stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca

You are invited to participate in a research study about female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects located in Northern Alberta’s Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. This research project is being conducted as part of Stephanie Nagy’s Master’s thesis. The findings of this study will be available online publicly on cIRcle. The objective of this study is to examine the experiences of female long-distance labour commuters from the Okanagan to Alberta’s resource extraction job projects. Currently, there is very little data published on this research area. This study will explore the different factors that impact the overall experiences of female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects, and the barriers or challenges female mobile workers have working in a male-dominated industry. The study also seeks to explore the coping strategies female mobile workers use to overcome any barriers they face. Lastly, this study will focus on the possible implementation of future services to help improve the overall quality of life for female mobile workers to resource extraction jobs projects.

To be considered eligible for this study you must be: (a) a Canadian citizen or have a permanent residence status, (b) female, (c) English proficient, (d) at least 19 years or older, (e) reside in one of the five electoral districts in the Okanagan (see page 4 for a list of eligible cities), (f) have at least a total (non-cumulative) 6 months experience as a mobile worker to a resource extraction job project located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (If you have been laid off you ARE still eligible to participate, and (g) worked as a mobile worker in resource extraction within the last 3-5 years.

Stephanie Nagy (UBC-Okanagan) is conducting research for the purposes mentioned above. You are asked to complete a survey that will last approximately 45 minutes. You have a choice of, either completing the survey on a hard copy format, or online. This online questionnaire is administered by the UBC-hosted version of FluidSurveys/Survey Monkey. This questionnaire survey complies with the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and all data is stored and backed up in Canada. No one will have access to your information other than principal investigator and the co-investigator of this study.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions, and you can withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. If you withdraw from this study, your data will not be used.

As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive a 10$ gift card to a local coffee shop of your choice.
You may be contacted at a later date regarding a follow-up interview, which will take a total of 45 minutes to complete. You will receive an additional 10$ gift card to a local coffee shop of choice for your participation in the interview.

Any questions that you have about the study will be answered to your satisfaction. All responses to questions will assist the researcher’s understanding of experiences and any challenges and/or barriers that female mobile workers face when long-distance commuting from the Okanagan to The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Fort McMurray). The research findings are intended to reveal recommendations that could be used to benefit female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects. You may ask, now or in the future, any questions that you have about this study.

Please be assured that no information will ever be released or printed that would disclose your personal identity and that your responses will be kept completely confidential. Your participation in the study is voluntary and your decision to participate or not to participate will have no effect on yourself. There will be no risks to participants in this research study other than those encountered in everyday life. You may withdraw your participation from this study at any time.

If you have any questions about this research project, you may contact Stephanie Nagy at: telephone number 250-808-6784, e-mail: stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca and Carlos Teixeira at: telephone number 250-807-9313, email: carlos.teixeira@ubc.ca

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-877-822-8598 or the UBC Okanagan Research Services Office at 250-807-8832. It is also possible to contact the Research Participant Complaint Line by email (RSIL@ors.ubc.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

My signature indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

______________________________
Signature of Participant

______________________________
Print Name

______________________________
Date

*If you wish to receive an executive summary of the completed research, please complete the following contact information and a copy will be sent to you by mail or email.

Address: ___________________________________________________

Email: ______________________________________________________
Appendix I: Interview Consent Form

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences 3333
University Way
Kelowna, BC Canada V1V 1V7

Semi-Structured Interview Consent Form
Research Project:
Workplace Experiences of Female Mobile Workers from Kelowna CMA to Resource Extraction Job Projects in Fort McMurray, Alberta

Principal Investigator: Carlos Teixeira, Professor, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Irving K. Barber School of the Arts and Sciences, 1147 Research Road, Arts 268, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, V1V 1V7, Tel. 250-807-9313; email: carlos.teixeira@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: Stephanie M. Nagy, Graduate Student, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Irving K. Barber School of the Arts and Sciences, 1147 Research Road, Arts 384, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, V1V 1V7, Tel. 250-808-6784; email: stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca

You are invited to participate in a research study about female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects located in Northern Alberta’s Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. This research project is being conducted as part of Stephanie Nagy’s Master’s thesis. The findings of this study will be available online publicly on cIRcle. The objective of this study is to examine the experiences of female long-distance labour commuters from Kelowna CMA to Alberta’s resource extraction job projects. Currently, there is very little data published on this research area. This study will explore the different factors that impact the overall experiences of female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects, and the barriers or challenges female mobile workers have working in a male-dominated industry. The study also seeks to explore the coping strategies female mobile workers use to overcome any barriers they face. Lastly, this study will focus on the possible implementation of future services to help improve the overall quality of life for female mobile workers to resource extraction jobs projects.

To be considered eligible for this study you must be: (a) a Canadian citizen or have a permanent residence status, (b) female, (c) English proficient, (d) at least 19 years or older, (e) reside in Kelowna’s CMA, (f) have at least a total (non-cumulative) 6 months experience as a mobile worker to a resource extraction job project located in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo, and (g) worked as a mobile worker in resource extraction within the last 3-5 years.

Stephanie Nagy (UBC-Okanagan) is conducting research for the purposes mentioned above. You are asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. As a token of appreciation for your participation, you will receive a gift card worth 10$ to a local coffee shop of your choice. Your participation is completely voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time without explanation or penalties. The interview will be audio-recorded. At any time you can ask that the audio recorder be turned off for a period of time while making a point that you do not want recorded. It is understood that the tape recording of the interview is for note taking use only by Stephanie Nagy and her project supervisor (Dr. Carlos Teixeira). There will be no further use of the tapes in any fashion. No one except Stephanie Nagy, based at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan and her supervisor will ever listen to the tapes. The tapes will also be destroyed immediately upon the completion of the study.

Any questions that you have about the study will be answered to your satisfaction. All responses to questions will assist the researcher’s understanding of experiences and any challenges and/or barriers that female mobile workers face when long-distance commuting from Kelowna CMA to The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (Fort McMurray). The research findings are intended to reveal recommendations that could be used to benefit female
mobile workers to resource extraction job projects. You may ask, now or in the future, any questions that you have about this study.

Please be assured that no information will ever be released or printed that would disclose your personal identity and that your responses will be kept completely confidential. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. There will be no risks to participants of this interview other than those encountered in everyday life. You may withdraw your participation from this interview at any time. If you withdraw from this study, your data will not be used.

If you have any questions about this research project, you may contact Stephanie Nagy at: telephone number: 250-808-6784, e-mail: stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca and Carlos Teixeira at: telephone number 250-807-9313, email: carlos.teixeira@ubc.ca

If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 1-877-822-8598 or the UBC Okanagan Research Services Office at 250-807-8832.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

My signature indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

________________________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant       Print Name
________________________________________________________________________

Date

*If you wish to receive an executive summary of the completed research, please complete the following contact information and a copy will be sent to you by mail or email.
Address: __________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________
Appendix J: Participant Initial Contact Letter and Screening Questions

Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, Canada, V1V 1V7

November, 2015

Initial Contact Letter and Screening for Eligibility-Participants
Research Project:
Workplace Experiences of Female Mobile Workers from Kelowna CMA to Resource Extraction Job Projects in Fort McMurray, Alberta

Dear ABCD,

My name is Stephanie Nagy. I am currently enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Master’s program at the University of British Columbia - Okanagan. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research study involving female mobile workers from the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna to resource extraction job projects located in the Service Area of Fort McMurray (RMWB), Alberta. This research project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. C. Teixeira (University of British Columbia Okanagan)

The objective of this study is to examine the workplace experiences of female long-distance labour commuters to Alberta’s resource extraction job projects. Currently, there is very little data published on the topic of female mobile workers in resource extraction industries, especially from those commuting from small or mid-sized cities such as those located in the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna. This study will explore the different factors that impact the overall workplace and commuting experiences of female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects, along with the barriers and challenges female mobile workers have working in a heavily male-dominated industry. The study also seeks to explore the coping strategies female mobile workers use to overcome these. Lastly, this study will focus on the possible implementation of future services to help female mobile workers to resource extraction jobs projects. The results of this study will be used to provide policy makers and resource extraction companies with recommendations for achieving improved quality of life for female mobile workers.

Your participation in this study will offer an important perspective. The results from this research study can potentially create future corporate and policy changes that will benefit female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects commuting between Kelowna CMA and Fort McMurray. Your participation in this survey means that your voice will be heard on issues that may be important to you regarding the availability of future services provided to female mobile workers in Alberta's Oil Sands.

Participation in this study will involve completing a 45-minute questionnaire survey (you have a choice of, either completing the survey online, or in a hard copy format), and you may also be called for a follow-up interview lasting 45 minutes total.

Each participant will receive a $10 coffee card as a token of appreciation for participating in the survey.

Participants who will be selected for the follow-up interview will receive an additional $10 coffee card as a token of appreciation for participating in the interview.

Please fill out the items on this page and send them to me at stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca, or call me at: 250-808-6784 and I can collect it from you.

Screening Questions:
1. Are you a Canadian citizen, or have a permanent residences status? □ Yes □ No
2. Are you a female who works for a (RMWB) Fort McMurray, Alberta oil/resource extraction company? □ Yes □ No
3. Are you a long-distance labour commuter (mobile worker)? □ Yes □ No
4. Are you a resident of the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna, British Columbia? □ Yes □ No
5. Do you speak English? □ Yes □ No
6. Are you age 19 years or older? □ Yes □ No
7. When did you start long-distance labour commuting (e.g. 20/06/12)? __ / __ / __

If your answer to any of the previous questions was “NO”, you will not be eligible to participate in this study, please do not continue.

If your answer to all of the previous questions was “YES”, you are invited to take part in this survey and share with me your experiences with long-distance labour commuting to work in Fort McMurray’s Resource Extraction Projects.

Thank you.
Please indicate which way you would like to fill out the questionnaire survey?

☐ Online ☐ Hard Copy

Please provide me with your contact information below, to receive more details about this study, and a recruitment poster, consent form, and the survey (online address or hard copy) will be sent to you.
Name:

Address:

Phone Number:

Email:
Appendix K: Tear Away Recruitment Poster

**Research Participants Wanted**

**Purpose:** To understand the unique experiences of female mobile workers to remote resource extraction industries.

**Eligibility:** You must be a women mobile worker from the Okanagan to Fort McMurray (RMWB); be 19 years or older; must be a Canadian citizen (or have a permanent residence status); and English proficient.

**Time Commitment:** You will be required to fill out an online survey lasting 45 minutes. A follow-up interview may be required lasting no more than 1 hour maximum.

**Benefits:** The findings of this study may provide beneficial services and policy recommendations for female mobile workers commuting to remote resource extraction industries like you.

**Risks:** There are no known risks involved in participating in this study. Your responses will be kept 100% confidential and your identity 100% Anonymous.

For more information on the study, please contact Stephanie Nagy (UBC) at:

**Email:** stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca **Phone:** (250) 808-6784
Appendix L: Recruitment Poster

UBC
The University of British Columbia

Irving K. Barber School of Arts and Sciences
3333 University Way
Kelowna, BC, Canada, V1V 1V7

November, 2015

Recruitment Poster for a UBCO Research Study:
Workplace Experiences of Female Mobile Workers from Kelowna CMA to Resource Extraction Job Projects in Fort McMurray, Alberta

Principal Investigator: Carlos Teixeira, Professor, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Irving K. Barber School of the Arts and Sciences, 1147 Research Road, Arts 268, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, V1V 1V7, Tel. 250-807-9313; email: carlos.teixeira@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: Stephanie M. Nagy, Graduate Student, University of British Columbia Okanagan; Irving K. Barber School of the Arts and Sciences, 1147 Research Road, Arts 384, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, V1V 1V7, Tel. 250-808-6784; email: stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca

- Are you a female mobile (fly-in/fly-out) worker
- Do you/have you work[ed] in resource extraction based jobs located in Fort McMurray, Alberta (RMWB)
- Do you live in the Census Metropolitan Area of Kelowna, B.C.

Consider participating in a research study concerned with the workplace experiences of female mobile workers to resource extraction job projects.

Participants will be asked to complete a 45-minute survey [online or hard copy format] and may also be called for a follow-up interview.

Each participant will receive a $10 coffee card as a token of appreciation for participating in the survey.

Participants who will be selected for the follow-up interview will receive another $10 coffee card as a token of appreciation for participating in the interview.

For more information, please contact Stephanie Nagy via email or phone.

Email: stephanie.nagy@alumni.ubc.ca Phone: (250) 808-6784