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Just for Money? : An Exploratory Study Into the Motivations of Nude Dancers

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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Elaine Vance for the Master of Science in Sociology were presented December 8th, 1999, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Elaine Vance for the Master of Science in Sociology presented December 8, 1999.

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Women working as nude dancers have been depicted both in academia and popular literature either as victims of patriarchal exploitation and economic oppression, or as empowered women choosing the most profitable form of work out of the limited options provided for them. This study explores these opposing motivational factors for the entrance and continuance of nude dancing, integrating the theoretical framework of Sex Positive feminism with Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory approach. Sex Positive feminism asserts that sex work is neither oppressive nor exploitative but rather can be a consensual and legitimate avenue resulting in an increase in women's power. This study examined 1) factors present in the occupational choice to dance nude, 2) motivations for women to continue dancing nude and 3) how Sex Positive feminism is reflected in women's motivational factors for nude dancing.

Twelve women who worked as nude dancers in Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California participated in focus group interviews. This form of data

collection is the most appropriate due to the exploratory and feminist nature of this topic. Three factors were present in the initial choice to dance nude: 1) an intrigue, 2) a contact and 3) an awareness of economic gain. Women continued to dance nude because the economic reward provided them with flexibility and independence. However, this economic reward for nude dancing also reflects the attention given to them by customers. The women defined this attention as being a motivator for continuing as well. The ability to use their sexuality for economic gain provides them with emotional confidence including positive body image and the ability to set and maintain boundaries. However, the focus groups revealed that when the use of their sexuality does not provide them with economic gain, their emotional confidence becomes unstable. This study demonstrates the complexity of nude dancing and suggests that nude dancing contains both empowering and oppressive elements.

JUST FOR MONEY?

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY INTO THE MOTIVATIONS OF

NUDE DANCERS

by

ELAINE VANCE

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

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Chapter I

Statement of the Problem

Nude dancing[1] has a unique position in society. Although the state attempts to discourage nude dancing through regulations, it is a legal occupation. However, nude dancing's legal status is not reflective of complete acceptance by American society as a legitimate occupation. Because nude dancing challenges the sexual standard of intimacy and monogamy valued in Western culture, it has traditionally been viewed as a deviant if not disreputable occupation (Time, 1988). Yet, it remains legal and flourishes economically possibly indicating a shift in society's perception of the deviant nature of nude dancing. Furthermore, there has been a recent increase in advocacy groups promoting nude dancing as a legal occupation.

Nude dancing's unclear, fluid deviant status in society has prompted examination from various perspectives. Some social scientists have sought to discover why women would choose this devalued and stigmatized occupation (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Carey et al., 1974; Thompson and Harred, 1992; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998). They seek to discover what "'kinds' of persons...become deviant and the developmental process by which they become that 'kind'" (Cohen, 1966 cited in Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). Other studies examine nude dancing as a legitimate

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[1] The words 'nude dancing' and 'stripping' are used interchangeably. As with the terms 'nude dancer,' 'stripper' and 'woman.'

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occupation and conclude that the structure and motivations are similar to other mainstream occupations (Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997).

Regardless of the perspective, the most commonly reported reason women have worked as nude dancers is for economic gain or 'fast money' (Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Carey et al, 1974; Enck and Preston, 1988; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Thompson and Harred, 1992). Several studies conclude that nude dancers do so out of an economic necessity stemming from the lack of occupational alternatives (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Thompson and Harred, 1992).

Feminist theories regarding sex work, also reflect the fuzzy deviant status of nude dancing and look at the occupation from different viewpoints. Radical feminists view sex work as deviant and oppressive to women because of the objectification involved (McKinnon, 1987; Dworkin, 1987). On the other hand, Sex Positive feminists view sex work as another form of barter and as contributing to a progressive society (Nagle, 1997; Chapkis, 1997). Consequently, they interpret the economic incentive to dance nude differently. Radical feminists define the monetary element as a tool to coerce women into a degrading occupation whereas, Sex Positive feminists do not view sex work as debasing and instead ask the question 'with such economic rewards, why *wouldn't* a woman choose sex work?'

In addition to money as an incentive to nude dancing, Sex Positive feminism asserts that sex work contributes to a sense of power and control both economically

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and sexually over the dominant group represented by males (Chapkis, 1997; Nagel, 1997). Economically, when society affords women few alternatives to support themselves, their sexuality can provide both survival and power. A woman controls a valuable commodity for which a man is willing to pay. Furthermore, sex work gives women an opportunity to express themselves in a sexually powerful manner that severs the bond between sex and love and gives sex workers the opportunity to explore sexuality that is not confined to monogamy and intimacy (Chapkis, 1997; LeMoncheck, 1997). As a consequence of this financial and sexual control, Sex Positive feminists claim sex workers experience positive self-esteem and heightened sexual agency (Nagel, 1997; Chapkis, 1997). These claims have not been empirically tested.

The present study explores these additional rewards of nude dancing as defined by Sex Positive feminism. It attempts to examine factors that contribute to the entrance of nude dancing but more specifically, the motivations for women to continue working as nude dancers. Simply, what do women like or dislike about dancing nude? Why do women continue to dance nude? Do women dance 'just for the money', as described by Radical feminists or are the motivations to begin and continue stripping more complex than simply economic remuneration. Perhaps nude dancers experience positive rewards as Sex Positive feminism claims? The present study explores these questions.

This study used focus group methodology, which has not been previously used in the study of nude dancers. It was chosen for a number of reasons. First, focus groups allow for participants to have a high level of control over the conversation. This shifting of control from the researcher to the participants is also especially beneficial in feminist research (Wilkinson, 1987) because the researcher can not impost his/her own agenda (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981). This less invasive form of data collection is doubly important because of the negative societal attitude that nude dancers are immoral and deviant (Jarrett, 1987). Focus groups can provide a non-threatening environment for a group of women who may feel as thought they may be judged by the researcher through other forms of data collection. Furthermore, because this methodology allows the women to discuss motivational factors within a group of women with similar experiences, the data is from *their* perspective, in *their* own words. This is not only essential in exploratory research but feminist research as well. Focus group methodology is consistent with feminist research perspectives in that the participants are acknowledged as experts on the topic and therefore their input is believed as *their* reality (Reiharz, 1992).

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

History of Nude Dancing

Women have danced nude for remuneration since the 1830s with the creation of burlesque dancing in Paris (Price, 1996). Traditional burlesque constituted a bawdy comical farce of theatre and dance in which women were able to show their legs on stage for the first time. It was considered an art form where women were held in a celebrity status. Money was not a main motivational factor; rather the lure of the possibility of fame and prestige was the driving force that led women to burlesque. Although stripping evolved from traditional burlesque, contemporary nude dancing as performed in the United States is a relatively recent form of entertainment. Sometimes toward the end of the nineteenth century, the striptease act emerged in American burlesque theaters (Aldridge, 1970). The strip tease act as it exists in the United States today has four basic components.

> "the 'flash', or entrance; the 'parade' or promenade back and forth fully clothed; the 'tease' or progressive disrobing; and finally the 'strip' or final stage of denuding, that is, as far as local authorities permit" (Aldridge, 1970: 569).

It was the emergence of this, more sexual style of burlesque that changed public attitude towards both forms of dance. By the 20th century American burlesque became synonymous with stripping and the art of sexual display (Jarrett, 1997). However, for a time, the two areas of burlesque and stripping remained separated-some clubs had a stage for traditional burlesque and others for stripping. The blending of the two forms of dance created public outcry and censorship and the act of stripping was forced underground. Women began to leave the burlesque clubs and moved into night clubs or strip clubs where the majority or strippers remain today. The act of stripping began to eclipse burlesque. Changes in licensing policies ended the censorship of shows, like O*h! Calcutta* and allowed for the display of full nudity. This brought about dramatic changes in the art of striptease. "With the embracing of the erotic by the 'legitimate' stage, 'erotic' [striptease] dancing was forced to embrace the pornographic" (Jarrett, 1997: 191). Further adding to the decline of striptease as art, the peep show emerged. These booths, in which glass separated stripper from customer, put the dancers on 'gynecological display' (Jarrett, 1997: 192). The women did not earn a wage but worked for tips alone. Customers would pay for 'peeping time' but for the 'naughty bits,' the men paid extra (Jarrett, 1997: 192). By the early 1980s, strippers had been reduced to mere sex workers. With the decline of dancing as a form of art, money became the only compensation and thus the only reason women danced nude (Jarrett, 1997). This motivation has continued.

Related Literature

Research conducted on nude dancers has focused primarily on four areas (1) demographics of nude dancers (Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970); (2) the career contingencies involved with the occupational selection of nude dancers (McCaghy and Skipper, 1970; Carey, Peterson and Sharpe, 1974; Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998); (3) the study of interaction patterns between stripper and customer (Paretti and O'Conner, 1989; Thompson and Harred; 1992, Reid and Epstein, 1994); and (4) the 'neutralization techniques' that dancers employ in an attempt to distance themselves from stigmatization (Paretti and O'Conner, 1989; Thompson and Harred, 1992; Reid and Epstein, 1994). Although the purpose of this study is to examine the motivational factors of nude dancers, it is imperative in the analysis of data to address all relative literature (Glaser and Strauss, 1990).

Demographics of Nude Dancers

Literature on nude dancing has focused primarily on female dancers (McCaghy and Skipper, 1970; Carey, Peterson and Sharpe, 1974; Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998; Paretti and O'Conner, 1989; Thompson and Harred, 1992, Reid and Epstein, 1994). The majority of the dancers

are young, with a median age from 22-25. Many studies have found that nude dancers are mainly white, with women of color comprising less than 5% of the samples from four studies (Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Carey et al., 1974; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Thompson and Harred, 1992). Nearly half of the dancers had at least one child; only one third of the women lived with husbands or with partners (Thompson and Harred, 1992).

Skipper and McCaghy (1970) examined patterns in the early life of the strippers. Strippers tend to be in the first ordinal position in their families (Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). Additional patterns are: early physical maturation; early sexual experience; distance relationship with parents; and early independence and departure from home. Most of the women come from working class background and nearly half of the dancers had only high school degrees (Boles and Garbin, 1974b). Other studies have shown more diversity in educational level, however few participants were college graduates (Carey et al., 19774; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970).

Several studies have examined physical characteristics of nude dancers (Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Carey et al., 1974; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). When compared to physical traits of the "average American woman," as well as Playboy Playmates of the Month, the strippers "were taller, heavier, with larger hips, and had extremely well developed busts, several approaching astronomical proportions" (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970: 394). Boles and Garbin (1974b) did not take body measurements of

their participants but could observe there was no "modal body type" and that the strippers had various "shapes and sizes" (pg. 319). This study also found that as many as half of the strippers have had silicone breast implants (Boles and Garbin, 1974b).

Career Contingencies

Skipper and McCaghy (1970) suggest that the choice of stripping is largely fortuitous and identify three contingencies leading to the choice. First, the women had a history of using their physical attributes for affectional and economic advantage. Second, an opportunity structure existed making stripping an option. The majority of the women lived in a large metropolitan area where strip clubs existed. They were all reasonably attractive or "possessed a physical anomaly, usually large breasts" (pg. 403) that would ensure a job as a stripper. Furthermore, in nearly all the cases, the women learned they had the qualifications through friends or acquaintances. Thirdly, there was a sudden awareness of the ease of monetary compensations derived from stripping. Thompson and Harred (1992) found, in addition to these conditions, that over half of the dancers indicated they had first danced as a result of being "slightly or highly intoxicated and being dared or challenged to do it" (pg. 299). Coupled with the intoxication, many respondents were "dared or challenged to do it" (Thompson and Harred, 1992: 299).

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Studies (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970 and Thompson and Harred, 1992) report that the choice of stripping stems from spontaneity and adventure. However, Skipper and McCaghy (1970) concludes, "in the area of economics, rationality does play a key role in choosing to strip" (pg. 398). Many of the dancers in Thompson and Harred's (1992) sample indicated that they desperately needed a job and could not find a better paying occupation. Skipper and McCaghy (1970) reported similar findings. The women made far more money than the union minimum at the time of the study and the authors found that the availability for prostitution in certain clubs provided some women a means for additional monetary gain. In comparison to other women working in fields such as secretaries, nurses or teachers, strippers earned a higher income. It was not only the economic rewards that motivated the women to strip, but also the lack of alternatives present. "...Of the 35 girls interviewed only one had the talent, training, or education to make more money at any other legal occupation than stripping" (pg 399).

Resembling Skipper and McCaghy's study (1970), Boles and Garbin (1974b) found the availability of occupational alternatives was a consequential variable for choosing nude dancing. Only one of the women's educational background could provide the foundation for a similarly paying job. Furthermore, in addition to the lack of alternatives the majority of the dancers had experienced a major life crisis prior to their entrance into the business. Fifty percent of these crises had been a divorce causing the women to face a monetary dilemma. Similar to previous studies (Skipper

and McCaghy, 1970), Boles and Garbin (1974b) found that the women had been initiated into the industry by friends or associates. But, they concluded that it is the integration of the two components (the agents of recruitment with the timing of recruitment) that is consequential in choosing stripping as an occupation.

The study of occupational choice for nude dancing focuses mainly on variables leading to the initial entrance (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Thompson and Harred, 1992). Forsyth and Deshotels (1998) examine both entrance and continuance variables for two reasons. First, entrance and continuance are part of a tightly woven process and second, the delineation between the two stages is vague. Where does entrance end and continuation begin? What Skipper and McCaghy labeled as entrance, may have been 'realized' by the dancers after being in the occupation.

Forsyth and Deshotels (1998) found that the women had a tendency toward exhibitionistic behavior, an opportunity structure that made nude dancing an option, and an awareness of easy economic gain. The authors believed the three categories applied not only to the entrance into stripping but the continuation as well. Money was the most frequently given response to the question of why these women entered into the profession but the authors determined this was illogical in regards to the continuation. Most of the women had no concrete plans for future employment and many of them returned to the job after they were financially secure either through independent means or marriage. Many dancers reported returning because they missed

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the subculture of dancers. Therefore, money may have been the reason for entering into the occupation but "like many other forms of work from deviant to professional, their work had taken on meanings other than economic" (p. 90).

Other studies report similar findings (Boles and Garbin 1974a; Reid and Epstein, 1994; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998). Boles and Garbin (1974a) examined nude dancing not as a deviant occupation but as an exchange process, in which individuals perform activities in exchange for goods (in this case, monetary compensation). The authors found that stripping contained certain characteristics not so dissimilar to other occupations and that the 'goods' received extend past that of monetary rewards. The women reported to enjoy being part of show business but the identity of entertainer is offset by the demands of the club. The women are aware of their primary role in the club ("We're here to sell booze and sex" (p. 327)) not that of entertainer. The social network of the strip club is the most fulfilling intrinsic reward for the dancers. Women reported after having left the job, they missed the socialization and network that the club and the other dancers provided. The authors thus concluded, "their work had taken on meanings other than economic" (pg. 335).

Reid, Epstein and Benson (1994) applied role identity theory to nude dancers. Their study suggests most dancers did not perceive the characteristics of the occupation as reflective of their personal values. This insinuates that dancers engage in this occupation to gain external rewards ("quick money") rather than internal

rewards (personal fulfillment). The authors, however, found a few dancers who regard their occupation as highly reflective of their values and beliefs. Unlike other dancers who strip purely for economic reasons, "these dancers derive personal, psychological satisfaction from their occupation" (Reid et al, 1994: 287). Yet, Reid and Epstein fail to discuss what personal and psychological satisfaction these women gain or what variables may attribute to them.

Customer- Stripper Interaction

Studies on customer-dancer interaction (Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Enck and Preston, 1988; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Bell et al., 1998; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998) can provide additional insight into the motivations of nude dancing. Many studies have found dancers enjoy stripping because of the interaction they have with the customer (Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Bell et al., 1998; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998)

Boles and Garbin (1974a) describe the interaction between stripper and customers are characterized as "counterfeit intimacy" based on inauthentic relations. Ploys are used by both customer and dancer to enhance the level of counterfeit intimacy in order to meet each participants goals for being in the strip club (Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Enck and Preston, 1988). The dancer's main objective is to sell drinks for the establishment while, simultaneously earn tips for herself. The customer's manifest intent for being in the club is "impersonal, sexual turn-ons for money" (Ronai

and Ellis, 1989: 454). Five types of interactions between stripper and customer ensure the goals for each participant are met. They are: 1) the expression of "apathetic disengagement," in which the stripper shows no emotion or engagement with the customer; 2) flirting, bantering and joking with customers; 3) the utilization of men from the audience in her dance routine; 4) the display of anger and aggression towards the customer when they become unruly; and 5) when anger and aggression fails, the dancer will engage in actions which will repulse the customer.

Ronai and Ellis (1989) characterize customer-dancer interactions as mirroring "respectable" sales negotiations that occur in "mainstream culture" (pg. 272). This study used "complete-member-researcher" to examine the strategies used by nude dancers on the stage and on the floor to select customers and to negotiate the sale of table dances. The dancer's presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) in which she portrays herself as being sexual available and the use of seduction rhetoric (Rasmussen and Kuhnm 1976) were the most successful techniques to ensure the goals of both dancer and customer were met.

Several studies claim that the dancers tend to have control within the interaction between customer and dancer (Enck and Preston, 1988; Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Bell et al., 1998) and "like the power" within the relationship (Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998). The dancer manipulates the customer to buy table dances, drinks and to tip and have control over the direction of the interaction (Ronai and Ellis, 1989). The dancers are aware of this manipulation whereas, the customer may not be

aware of the deception. As "purveyors and gatekeepers of sexuality" (Ronai and Ellis, 1989: 295) the dancers have powerful control. The dancer can maintain control of who she selects as a customer and the level of physical intimacy between herself and the customer (Ronai and Ellis, 1989). Dancers reported that this sense of control in the club was not experienced in their private lives (Bell et al., 1998).

Several studies describe the interactions between customer and stripper as mutually exploitative and objectifying (Boles and Garbin, 1974a; Bell et al., 1998). Customers are exploited by dancers who promise to fulfill their sexual needs but do not while, dancers are objectified and exploited by customers. Furthermore, the dancers defined the societal reaction in which nude dancers are scapegoated and stigmatized as more exploitative than the interaction between dancer and customer (Bell et al., 1998).

Deviance and Response

Many studies have identified nude dancing as a deviant occupation (Carey et al., 1974; Skipper and McCaghy, 1969; 1970; Thompson and Harred, 1992; Reid et al., 1984). Ritzer (1977) cites three criteria that can cause an occupation to be regarded as deviant: 1) if it is illegal, 2) if it is immoral and 3) if it is improper. Nude dancing, while legal in the United States is viewed by the general public as immoral and improper behavior (Time, 1988).

As a response to this attitude, nude dancers manage the stigmatization by employing certain strategies that help them cope with a "spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963). One way is to reveal the role as nude dancer to a relatively small group while keeping it hidden from the rest of the world (Thompson and Harred, 1992). Another strategy is to use neutralization techniques (Sykes and Matza, 1957) such as denying the deviancy of their occupation, condemning those who condemn them and framing their behavior as altruistic rather than deviant (Thompson and Harred, 1992).

Studies have found a high population of lesbian women who work as nude dancers (Boles and Garbin, 1974(b); Skipper and McCaghy, 1969). Skipper and McCaghy (1969) suggest that nude dancers use lesbianism as a coping device to deal with the affects their job has on their sexuality, since the strippers come to "characterize...their [male] audience as 'degenerates'" (Skipper and McCaghy, 1969, pg. 267).

The association of nude dancing with prostitution is further evidence of the deviant status of nude dancing (Boles and Garbin, 1974(b); Carey et al, 1974; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). Studies have shown that nude dancers provoke and entice the customer to engage in prostitution for the higher monetary compensation (Boles and Garbin, 1974(b); Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Ronai and Ellis, 1989). Furthermore, it is suggested that nude dancing is a gateway to prostitution (Boles and Garbin, 1974(b); Carey et al., 1974; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970).

As the review of literature demonstrates, there are numerous areas that need further analysis. For instance, although several studies have examined women's motivations for choosing to work as nude dancers (Boles and Garbin, 1974b; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970; Thompson and Harred, 1992; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1998) there lacks an in-depth look at the motivations that lead women to continue to dance nude. Simply, what does a woman like about nude dancing? What are the reasons she continues to dance? Previous studies have used either individual interviews or participant observations consequently denying the richness of the women's *voice*. Furthermore, few studies have been conducted by a woman from a feminist perspective, which supports and incorporates the reality of the dancer from *her* perspective. This study attempts to address some of these gaps.

The Debate on Sex Work

The current feminist debate on sexual correctness largely focuses on the sex industry, particularly pornography and prostitution. Sex work, however is not confined to these two arenas. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1993), sex work is

> a broad term that can easily accommodate a variety of situations in which some kind of sexual activity is performed in exchange for some kind of compensation. For example, it includes dancing and stripping, where there is no direct contact with "clients"; work in bars and hotels that is not formally recognized as "prostitution,"

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although the workers, at least on occasion, engage in sex for money with patrons of the establishment; as well as overt and acknowledged prostitution in brothels or following contacts made on the street (p.v).

There exists a major schism in feminist discourse involving the issue of sex work. Bromberg (1998) identifies five separate viewpoints: Radical, Socialist, Marxist, Existentialists[1] and Liberal. Although some ideological overlap exists within these five categories, Radical and Liberal feminism represent the polarization of the debate. Radical feminists believe sex workers are victims and work for the abolition of the sex industry (Barry et al, 1984; MacKinnon, 1987; Dworkin, 1987) whereas Liberal feminist claim sex work as a lucrative business in which women should have the freedom to choose (Bell, 1987; Delacoste & Alexander, 1987; Jenness, 1993; Pheterson, 1989; Chapkis, 1997; Nagel, 1997). A more recent interpretation of sex work has emerged attempting to extend concepts of Libertarian feminism and adding more perspective to the complexity of sex work. This branch, coined Sex Positive Feminism views sex work as non-oppressive and an avenue to challenge traditional sex roles (Valverde, 1987; Bell, 1987; Chapkis, 1997; Nagle, 1997; LeMoncheck, 1997). Sex Positive Feminism will provide the theoretical framework on which this study of nude dancers was developed.

Radical Feminists

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[1] Some concepts of Existentialist feminism are similar to Sex Positive or Sex Radical Feminism

The debate regarding sex work has primarily been guided by Radical Feminists. These feminists argue that in a patriarchal society men and women are in separate classes, whose economic and sexual interests are conflictual. Because of this antagonistic relationship, women are placed in a monetary disadvantage. Furthermore, their sexuality is molded to support the fantasies of men (Dworkin, 1988). Thus, sex work is both economically coercive and sexually exploitative. Radical Feminists "reject the lie that women freely choose prostitution for a whole array of economic alternatives that exist under civil inequity" (Wynter, 1987: 269). Rather, in a system where women's income is only approximately two-thirds the income earned by men (Osberg, 1987) and there exist no equal rights amendment, women have few real options and choices (MacKinnon, 1987).

Radical feminists (Chapkis, 1997) claim that the patriarchal structure of society does not allow for women to use their sexuality in any different, "positive" way. In their view, any attempt to do this will result in women's exploitation, possibly disguised by a false sense of empowerment. Basically, any sexual expression of women serves the needs of the 'male society.' Any woman who does claim any reward other than a monetary one has unconsciously internalized the dominant ideology and is experiencing 'false consciousness' (Abrams, 1990, cited in Bartlett, 1993). For this branch of feminism, a free expression of women's sexuality could be attained only in an equal society, where men and women have paritarian roles.

Radical Feminists contend that the sex industry is 'violence against women' (Dworkin, 1987) because it perpetuates the domination of women by men and guarantees men sexual access to women. The male appropriation of women's sexual life is pivotal to women's oppression (Barry et al, 1984; Dworkin, 1987; MacKinnon, 1987). Therefore, Radical Feminists seek to eradicate sex work through government intervention in order to protect the status of all women.

Liberal Feminism

This branch of feminism stems from the political stance of 'a woman's body, a woman's choice' and contends that the government should stay out of the private affairs of its citizens (Bromberg, 1998). Liberal Feminists view sex work as a contractual labor and contends that women are free to enter into those contracts. Pateman (1992, cited in Bromberg, 1997) shows that a sex worker is an independent contractor who has it within her means to start or stop a transaction. Whereas Radical feminist oppose sex work because it is the commodification of a woman as an object, Liberal feminist assert that many contractual interactions (sports players, models) result in the person viewed as a 'good' and not a person and yet there is no assertion of objectification. Liberal Feminist want to free women from oppressive gender roles and assert that sex work can accomplish this rather than perpetuate it. (Bromberg, 1998).

Liberal Feminism has three general assumptions. First, they believe that many women freely choose sex work after exploring alternative work options. Second, they believe that sex work should be considered as legitimate and profitable work (Jenness, 1993; Pheterson, 1989). And third, to deny the opportunity to choose sex work is a civil rights violation (Jenness, 1993). These women "demand the recognition [of sex workers] as workers as well as the freedom to financial autonomy…occupational choice…[and] worker's rights and protection" (International Committee on Prostitutes' Rights, cited in Pheterson, 1986, pp. 192-197). Liberal Feminists seek to decriminalize or legalize sex work because societal stigma is the basis of sex worker's degradation and oppression not- the job itself.

Theoretical Framework

Sex Positive Feminism (Bell, 1987; Chapkis, 1997; Nagle, 1997; LeMoncheck, 1997) will provide the theoretical framework for the development of this study's methodology and guide the analysis of the data. This particular framework was chosen because it acknowledges the social differences among women and the fact that the social location of any one woman will affect how she sees herself (LeMoncheck, 1997). In other words, Sex Positive feminism allows for the *possibility* that sex work can be a positive experience for *some* women. Rather than the indiscriminate claim made by Radical feminists that sex work is debasing to *all* women and thus oppressive

to *all* women, this framework acknowledges that certain behavior may or may not be characterized as degrading by some women. To Sex Positive feminists the choice to make that definition must come from individual women rather than a group of feminist seeking to 'protect' all women from what *they* define as demeaning (Nagle, 1997; Chapkis, 1997; LeMoncheck, 1997). Sex Positive feminism was chosen as the theoretical framework because of this—because it allows for women to speak for themselves and define what experiences are positive or negative in their *own* lives.

Sex Positive Feminism

Sex Positive Feminism asserts that sex work is neither oppressive nor exploitative but rather can be a consensual and legitimate avenue resulting in an increase in women's power. Whereas Liberal Feminist contend women should have the personal 'right' to choose sex work regardless of concerns for the social good, Sex Positive Feminists assert that the participation in sex work contributes to a progressive society. Sex work disputes traditional feminine sexual values of monogamy, intimacy and romance by identifying that these patriarchal stereotypes are encouraged mainly for women and by redefining women's sexuality to suit their individual erotic needs (Bell, 1987; Delacoste and Alexander, 1987; LeMoncheck, 1997; Chapkis, 1997). According to Sex Positive feminists, degradation originates not from commercial sex work itself but from the social context in which it is practiced. Degradation stems

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from the social construction that the objectification of women is inherently oppressive and dehumanizing rather than from the occupation itself. Sex Positive feminists assert that sex work provides women the arena to challenge this traditional construction of feminine sexuality by acknowledging that a delicate interplay exists between 'object' and 'subject' in which sex work can contain both objectification and agency. "Women provide a commercial service when they sell sex, thus opening the door for sex workers as sexual subjects to determine the terms and conditions of their work" (LeMoncheck, 1997: 134).

Furthermore, a woman has the right to define what behavior is degrading to her. Judith M. Hill (1991) claims being degraded requires more than being subordinated or exploited: degradation implies that the sex worker is perceived by herself, the customers, or the general public as unworthy of anything better. Society defines sex workers as immoral and deviant (Jarrett, 1996), yet many women in the sex industry view the exchange as noting more than bodily barter with no feeling of degradation. In other words, if a woman does not attach the same meaning (that it is degrading) to sex work how can it be oppressive?

Moreover, a capitalistic society objectifies many people (sprts player, body guards, models) as mere 'body parts' and commodifies them with no assertion of degradation. Because nude dancing or any sex work has historically been seen as immoral (Jarrett, 1996) there is a certain presupposition of sexual correctness--- that *this* type of commodification is immoral and sexually incorrect. To Sex Positive

feminists there must be a choice component to sexual correctness. A woman may or may not include non-traditional avenues for expressing her sexuality- regardless, she must have a choice. Sex Positive feminists contend that the sex industry can redefine women's sexuality in women's terms and can end the stigma attached to associating female sexual pleasure with earning power (LeMoncheck, 1997).

To advocates of Sex Positivism, women's sexuality is viewed as a source of power not as the cause of her oppression (Paglia, 1994). Economically, when society affords women few alternatives to support themselves, their sexuality can provide both survival and power. Using sexuality in a powerful and profitable manner may be the only resource that provides women with a sense of control over the dominant group represented by males. This power of a woman over a man is not an illusion, or 'false consciousness.' Carol Pateman (1992) claims "the man may think he 'has' her, but his sexual possession is an illusion; it is she who has him…she will not be 'taken,' since she is being paid" (p. 124). Sex Positive feminist claim this sense of control over her body can result in a woman's heightened self-esteem and sexual determinism. According to this feminist perspective, "if sexual self-determinism and economic independence are feminist goals, sex workers are the quintessential feminists, taking advantage of the power of a woman identified sexuality." (LeMoncheck, 1997: 135).

However, women who choose to use their sexuality in a powerful manner are asserting their "sexual agenda in a world ready to denigrate [her] or dismiss her for failing to act in a sexually subordinate role" (LeMoncheck, 1997 p. 55). Sex Positive

feminists claim it is the failure to act in a 'feminine' manner that is the cause of societal stigma, not the sexual nature of the occupation. Sex Positive feminists claim Radical feminists contribute to the societal attitude towards nude dancers because of their emphasis on what behavior is 'appropriate' for women.

According to Radical feminists, a woman who works in the sex industry within a patriarchal system cannot freely choose to sell sex (or in the case of nude dancers, selling the image of sex) because of the economic inequity between men and women. Because Radical feminists believe this coercive element leads to degradation, the state must intervene to protect the civil rights of women. However, according to Sex Positive feminists, the individual social location *within patriarchy* is vital to determine the nature of sexual degradation of sex work. It has been stated that,

> [blinded] by their own experiences as middle-class women, the social purity feminists were entirely unable to perceive the ways in which other women—their own working class sisters—could act as sexual agents rather than as victims, using sex to further their own purposes and pleasures (Snitow et al., 1983: 419).

Sex Positive feminists claim initiatives to prohibit sex work have historically resulted in the isolation, increased vulnerability, abuse and exploitation of sex work (Bell et al., 1998). Because sex workers can not rely on the state to protect them, they are more vulnerable to abuse from customers and employers. Strippers complain of exploitative 'consultant' contracts that provide no benefits but restrict their activities in ways that make them more employees than independent contractors. Because of

their stigmatized and legally restricted status, women can not turn to the law for protection of this form of oppression.

Furthermore, legal restrictions affect women's claims of 'free choice.' In response to a 1988 ordinance suggesting the prohibition of pornography, Hunter and Law (1988, cited in Bartlett, 1993) present the problematic effect of nude dancers claiming 'free choice' with such legal restrictions present.

> "In effect, the ordinance creates a strong presumption that women who participate in the creation of sexually explicit material are coerced. A woman's manifestation of consent- no matter how plain, informed, or even self-initiated- does not constitute a defense to her subsequent claim of coercion. Woman are judged incompetent of consent to participate in the creation of sexually explicit material and condemned as 'bad' if they do so (p.582).

However, Sex Positive feminists do not ignore the social context in which nude dancing (or any sex work) is embedded. In their view, "sex is understood to be constructed by this culture without being fully determined by it" (Chapkis, 1997: 23). Which means the organization of society is in continuous evolution, and is the result of the interaction (a two-way interaction) of people and structure. These feminists believe that the sexual standards set by the patriarchal society are fluid and can be challenged without an exploitative consequence.

The findings of this research are consistent with Sex Positive feminism. Although couched in a patriarchal society, women who work as nude dancers can experience empowerment through dancing, including a heightened independent sexual

agency and self-esteem. However, this location within a patriarchal society also generates oppressive elements as well—suggesting the complexity of nude dancing extends past that of the duality of the feminist debate.

Chapter III

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative data collection method was used for this study. Focus group methodology allows for women to discuss nude dancing among a group of women with similar experience, therefore the women discuss motivational factors from *their* perspective, in *their* own words. This is not only essential in exploratory research but feminist research as well. The participants are acknowledged as experts on the topic and therefore their input is believed as *their* reality (Reinharz, 1992).

Sites

The women were selected from a sample of nude dancers in Portland, Oregon and San Fransisco, California. Portland is a mid-sized city and is unique in the amount of adult-related businesses within city limits. There are approximately forty strip clubs (as listed in SFX magazine) and numerous sex paraphernalia shops. There are more sex-industry related businesses per capita in Portland than any other city in the United States (Oregonian, 1997). The lax obscenity laws contribute to the number

of strip clubs and also allow for full nudity to be present within a club that sells alcohol. The number of clubs in the city does not necessarily reflect a more liberal attitude towards sex work from the general population. For instance, Portland has implemented one of the only 'Prostitution Free Zones'[2] in the country and there exists numerous neighborhood association groups attempting to eradicate sex industry businesses from their communities. The large number of sex industry businesses coupled with the law enforcement's response may have contributed to the recent start-up of advocacy groups for sex workers.

On the other hand, San Francisco is a larger metropolis, but has more legal restrictions in terms of what is deemed 'obscene.' To illustrate, full nudity and alcohol sales are prohibited within the same establishment. There are also zoning restrictions that prohibit placement of clubs. In addition, dancers must pay a 'stage fee' which ranges from $40 to $200 per shift. Because of the restrictions, there are only approximately 12 strip clubs within city limits. However, there exists numerous sex worker advocacy groups and San Francisco was the site of the first attempt (successful) at unionizing strippers.

Sampling, Sample Selection and Access

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[2] The 'Prostitution Free Zone' refers to an neighborhood area defined by police as areas with a high rate of street prostitution activities. If arrested for soliciting or purchasing sex in this area, the person is prohibited by law to return within a one year period.

Since this study focuses on motivational factors for entrance and continuance into nude dancing, women who worked as nude dancers for one or more years were recruited. Snowballing and purposive sampling was used. Snowballing is a method that "yields a study sample through referrals made among people who are, or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981: 141). The contacts referred other women with similar demographic characteristics such as club site and age. Consequently, a broad cross-section of women was not attracted. The limitations of this were recognized.

A large sample was not obtained due to the lack of monetary compensation for participants and due to the difficulty in recruitment (as discussed in the next section). Mayer and Greenwood (cited in Westerlund, 1992) state, "the intent of qualitative study is to inquire about the properties of a given phenomena, not the distribution of these properties, [therefore] the sample size is relatively unimportant matter in exploratory research." However, after three focus groups, consistent themes emerged.

I attempted to recruit contacts in a variety of ways; 1) using local sex-worker advocacy groups as contacts, 2) contacts made within the strip club, 3) contacts made through friendship networks. Sex workers admit to creating an intentional barrier between themselves and the dominant culture for their own protection (LeMoncheck, 1997) and this proved to be true throughout the recruitment process. Although an assortment of recruitment approaches was attempted, only the third technique proved to be fruitful.

Because of the number of sex industry businesses in Portland as well as the national attention to sex workers' rights, sex work advocacy groups have recently emerged. I contacted the head of a local group to discuss my intended research and seek input on recruitment techniques. The woman refused to participate or to discuss the research. She explained that "every year around the end of the term, we always get students who want to study the 'freaks' and 'weirdos'" (telephone conversation, November, 1998). I assured her I was not coming from a deviance perspective, but rather sought to report the experiences of women from *their* perspective. She declined participation, but informed me that without monetary compensation I would face difficulty recruiting participants.

My next attempt at recruiting dancers was to enter local strip clubs and approach the dancer between each dance set and explain my research intent. I believed this technique would demonstrate to the women that I was not an 'outsider.' But what I discovered was that the women appeared to be suspicious of a person approaching them for a reason that deviated from the normal interaction within the strip clubs (ie wanting a table dance, or to give a tip). My gender may also have contributed to the element of suspicion, since women in strip clubs are not common. The fact that I was approaching them during their work hours with no monetary compensation also proved to be problematic. These women were at their place of employment and needed to be working and earning money rather than sitting and discussing my thesis. In an attempt to alleviate this problem I chose a technique used in a previous study on

strippers (Berger et al, 1998 unpublished). By sitting at the rack (the tables around the stage) and placing a dollar down during a dance, I attempted to show appreciation for the women. I hoped that because of the monetary 'gift' (albeit a dollar) the dancer would approach me after her set (which is customary between a tipping customer and stripper). At this time I could explain my intent and get her phone number. This however, made me uncomfortable as I felt I was 1) manipulating her behavior and 2) being dishonest about my intent for being in the club. In the end, I received numerous phone numbers but none of the women recruited in this fashion agreed to participate when contacted by phone.

Lofland & Lofland (1995) state in order for snowball sampling to begin, the researcher should attempt to gain access to the group by using 'preexisting relations of trust' (p.38). This is especially important when researching marginalized groups (Lofland, 1995). I did this in a variety of ways. At the time of recruitment, I was teaching at Portland State University and discussed my thesis with students. After my presentation, I asked students to contact me if they knew of women who stripped and who might be interested in participating. This recruitment yielded women who either danced themselves and/or were friends of dancers. I also relied on dancers that I personally knew to help in the recruitment phase of the focus group. This technique was successful because the element of suspicion of an 'outsider' was partially alleviated. However, my status of 'outsider' was consistently present. Many women referred by contacts refused to participate explaining "if you've never done it there is

no possible way you would understand" while those who did participate appeared enthusiastic that an 'outsider' took interest in their lives. For instance, Susie[2] stated, "it's nice to know people take us seriously." Additionally, many women declined to participate because of the method of data collection. As Beth stated, "the thought of sitting in a room with a bunch of strippers...discussing work...on my day off." One woman declined because discussing something as personal as stripping would be difficult to do in a group setting. It also proved to be difficult to get all the women in a one place at the same time. The life of the stripper has allowed them little structure and time frames. As Roxanne bluntly claimed, "to get at least one stripper to do something, you have to have at least eight commit."

Data Collection

Since stripping continues to be considered a devalued and deviant activity (Time, 1988) this study employed a less invasive form of data collection. Less structured focus groups can provide a non-threatening environment for a group of women who may feel as though individual interviewing they can be judged by the researcher.

Focus groups are particularly useful in exploratory research because they emphasize the participant's perspectives and allow the researcher to explore the participant's attitudes and experiences. "If the goal is to learn something new from the

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[2] All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

participants, then it is best to let them speak for themselves" (Morgan, 1997). In a group of women with similar experiences, women have the opportunity to voice their perspectives. Because the individual is in a homogeneous group of people, the focus group allows the researcher to study and analyze "the individual in social context" (Goffman, 1964), thus supporting claims that this type of data collection is "closer to the essential meanings of women's lives" (Wilkinson, 1998). The group setting is essential in the 'authenticity' of yielded data (Wilkinson, 1998). For this study a less structured- 'funnel style' interview guide was used. This format was used to encourage open discussion at the beginning of the group then to focus on specific motivations revealed by the women throughout the open discussion. This is essential due to the exploratory element of the study and it is appropriate for building a grounded theory on the motivations of nude dancers.

A low structured interview guide allows participants to have a high level of control over the conversation, although the moderator keeps them focused on certain topics. In exploratory research, giving the participants a higher level of control over the content and direction of the interview also yields high quality data. This shifting of control from researcher to participants is especially beneficial in feminist research (Wilkinson, 1987) that many times question the ethics of one-to-one interviewing (Finch 1984; Oakley, 1981). In one-to-one interviewing the researcher has authority over the entire proceeding and thus can impose his/her own agenda. With focus groups the power differential between researcher and participant is alleviated since the

"interviewer" takes an external role and controls the conversation without becoming an active part of it. The "interviewer" is indeed a moderator and often becomes a spectator of the interactions among participants: her duty is to make sure that the group's dynamics allow for each participant to express her opinions, and to guarantee that the conversation will remain focused on the chosen topics.

Focus groups provide an environment of "sharing and comparing" (Morgan, 1997) that other qualitative research does not. The main difference between focus groups and other forms of qualitative data is the interaction between participants. "The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan, 1988: 12 his emphasis). This interaction produces almost a synergetic feel and through this the data yields high quality content. The participants build off of one another and through contradictions and questioning "elicit the elaboration of responses" (Merton, 1987: 555, cited in Morgan, 1997).

The low control over participants conversation, and the inherent interactive element of the focus groups, creates an atmosphere "which empowers the respondents and demonstrates respect and concern for their views" (Wilkinson, 1998: 115). Especially with a marginalized group such as sex workers this is particularly useful in eliciting valuable data. Whereas with one-to-one interviews the researcher sets the tone of importance of different topics, respondents involved in focus groups rank issues according to the importance they give them and in this way they shape the

framework for understanding the world (Jarrett, 1994). Thus the focus group has the potential for dual benefits for those participating-- "empowerment through self-expression in a supportive group and potential for consciousness raising through group discussion" (Wilkenson, 1998: 119). Through meeting with women and sharing similar experiences women can develop sense of group consciousness and awareness of the social meaning of these experiences. Although the issues of consciousness building and empowerment were not the intent of the study, these were mere consequences of participation and are welcomed as such.

Three focus groups were conducted. They were comprised of three, four and five women, respectively. The smaller size of the focus groups enables more input by each participant and is beneficial for sensitive topics (Zeller, 1993). The focus groups with dancers in Portland were conducted at my home, while I met the women recruited for the San Francisco focus group at one of the dancer's homes. A more informal setting was chosen after discussing possible locations with some of the women participating.

Women in this study ranged in age from 21 to 44 with a median age of 27. Five women previously graduated from college and five were currently enrolled in university. Two possessed a high school diploma. The average length women danced nude was four years. On average, the women worked 16.5 hours per week making $450.00. For slightly over half of the participants, nude dancing was their sole source of income.

TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=12)

Characteristics	
Age (in years)	
Age range	21-44
Median age	27
Mean age	28
Length of time dancing (in years)	
Length range	1-14
Mean length	4
Years in Education (12=high school diploma, 16=college diploma)	
Median	15
Mean	15
Income per week (average 16.5 hours dancing per week)	
Income range	$100-1000
Income mean	$450
Other Sources of Income	
Supplemental income	45%
Only source of income	55%

Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes and after my introduction and an assertion of confidentiality, the conversation began with their introductions and my question of "how long have you been dancing and how did you first become involved in the industry." This initial open-ended question was both an ice-breaker and a watershed of information pertaining to the motivations for entering into the

occupation of nude dancer. (Refer to appendix for a complete copy of the interview guide)

Coding and Analysis

The data analysis procedure in this study was guided by the grounded theory approach, (Glaser and Strauss, 1990). This question based approach to theory construction intricately weaves together both data collection and analysis. Questions and constant comparisons are made throughout each step. Both asking questions and comparing answers elicits new understanding of a social phenomenon. The 'synergistic' interaction between participants in focus groups provides not only a unique form of data collection but is vital in regards to the analysis. It is through this process of analyzing the interactions that the researcher can recognize the themes on which participants show agreement. Of course, interaction can produce consensus, but also highlight contradictions that are a valuable source of insight into complex behavior (Morgan, 1997).

The first step to theory construction is open coding. The purpose is to identify both through data collection and analysis as many concepts and themes as possible. Concept grouping is the bedrock of grounded theory—"all grounded theory procedures are aimed at identifying, developing and relating concepts" (p 177). This was done, by comparing the transcripts of the focus groups and classifying similar themes.

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Axial coding is the stage in which main categories emerge by discovering relationships between themes and sub-themes. It is during this phase that the researcher is "uncovering and validating...relationships (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 185). During this process categories are developed in terms of causal conditions, the context which pertain to this category and the consequences of any action/interaction.

The third step, selective coding is specifically for theory development. At this level, the analysis is more abstract (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 117). Relationships between themes and sub-themes are examined and categories are integrated to complete an 'analytic story.'

Limitations to Focus Groups

As with every kind of qualitative research, the results obtained through the use of focus groups cannot be extended to a whole population. This is a limit of this methodology. However, what qualitative research lacks in the power of statistical generalization is compensated for by the depth of the findings and by the theoretical insights one can gain from them. The point, however is not whether qualitative methods are better than quantitative, but simply, which kind of methodology is more appropriate for studying a specific issue.

Another possible problem comes from the fact that the group dynamic itself may influence the nature of the data: participants can either withhold information that

they may share in private or they may express more extreme views in public rather than in private. Depending on the topic, the group setting may affect what they say and how they say it. It is therefore, the duty of the moderator to keep this risk as low as possible by creating a safe environment for sharing and probing for contradictory opinions and insights throughout the focus group (Morgan, 1997).

The potential for group influence, is compounded because of the sensitive nature of this study (Zeller, 1993). Questions about sexuality or "deviant occupations" have the potential to elicit socially desirable responses. The issue of "setting the agenda without setting the agenda" (Zeller, 1993) was addressed with what social scientists refer to as reactivity. Reactivity is "the phenomenon that the very process of measurement can induce change in the phenomenon itself" (Zeller, 1993: 171). Whereas with other modes of collecting data reactivity may threaten the validity of the data, Zeller (1993) argues that with focus groups sensitizing potential participants to the issues of the study enhance the value of the comments (Zeller, 1993). Through the initial recruitment process as well as the use of a 'screener questionnaire' participants were made aware of issues to be addressed in the focus group. This sensitizing allows the participants to 1) decline participating or 2) begin to mull over thoughts and opinions therefore avoiding a split second, socially desirable response. With sensitive topics and marginalized groups it is best not to create a "what's the first thing that comes to your mind" type atmosphere (Zeller, 1993: 169).

Chapter IV

Findings

The findings are reported in three sections—the first two sections address motivational factors for the entrance and continuance of nude dancing. The third section reports on the rewards the women receive from dancing. This study attempts to explore the motivational factors from the *dancer's* perspective therefore quotes[3] from participants are utilized to further illustrate the various themes which emerged from the focus groups.

Motivations for initial entrance

Previous literature has suggested that due to the lack of occupational alternatives, women choose nude dancing solely out of economic crisis (McCaghy & Skipper, 1970; Carey et al., 1974; Boles & Garbin, 1974a; Enck & Preston, 1988; Thompson & Harred, 1992; Reid & Epstein, 1994; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1998). Morgan (1991) defines choice as "include[ing] both knowledge of, and access to, real alternatives." Using this definition as a gauge to define 'free choice,'- this economic coercion is not evident with the women in this study. This sample consisted of women

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[3] All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants

who had either graduated from college (5) or were working toward their degree (5). Two participants had no college experience. Because of their educational levels and the possibility for occupational alternatives, these women perceived their occupation as being freely chosen. Sloan (1997) categorized those nude dancers with alternative occupational choices and a belief of free choice as 'experimenters.'

> "If my life was about making money, I wouldn't have danced. Even though I made as much money as I ever had...my life wasn't about money and that's why I started dancing. Because I have a college degree, I could have started an entry level somewhere and I could have a career right now if I wanted to. But I didn't want that." (Roxanne)

Rather than an economic strain being the motivating factor, women expressed there were other variables present that led them to choose stripping as an occupation--1) an initial intrigue, 2) a contact and 3) awareness of economic gain.

Initial Intrigue

The initial intrigue to nude dancing as an occupation varied for different women. Some viewed stripping as adventurous; some viewed it as yet another rebellious act, while others were attracted to it for the sexual element. The following quotes reflect the diversity of their initial interests in stripping:

> "...I was looking for adventure." (Susie)
> "Adventure was another reason" (Roxanne)

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"Just to sort of test yourself to see how far you could go"
(Lacey)

"Yeah, it was adventurous. You met crazy people…Totally like a rock-and-roll lifestyle. You met crazy people; you did crazy stuff. Yeah…especially when you're young, the whole lure of that…and then getting paid a lot of money…a lot more than I'd ever been paid before to do that. It was very nice…" (Roxanne)

"I got into it to supplement my unemployment and as a mid-life crisis thing and something to do…to say I did it…before time run[s] out and I'm really too old." (Lacey)

"Freedom…travel…money. I wanted to drive across [the] country and it got me out here." (Natasha)

"I started because I had just gotten out of this really intense relationship…we poured everything into each other and it was like my body was for the other person. And so I wanted to do something with my body that was just for me and get back into touch with my sexuality for myself." (Trixie)

"The first time I saw her [sister] on stage I was like…horrified… thought I could never do it. I was totally freaked out but at the same time I was like…I kept wanting to go back and see her at the place because there was something that was really interesting. Just, the whole sex part of it. Yeah. It was just totally…all those naked women. It was something I'd never seen before and it was totally interesting. I ran out of the money that I came out here with and went to Piedmont's and bought a pair of hot-pants and gloves. And that was it and I was making so much money I didn't even know what to do with it. That's how I got into it. I don't think I ever would have gotten into it if she [sister] weren't into it." (Haley)

Haley's quote reflects the variety of factors that play into the occupational choice of nude dancing.

Contact

The presence of a contact is a crucial element contributing to the initiation of deviant activity (Sutherland, 1934; Matza, 1964). All of the women in the sample knew either women who stripped, patrons or employees of the strip clubs. This contact provided the women with the norms and values associated with stripping and the rationalization of legitimizing deviant behavior (Sutherland, 1934). This legitimacy allowed the women into the subculture of strip clubs, further changing their image of stripping. Thus the choice to dance nude is part of a process (Matza, 1964) rather than one made at a fixed point in time. The following quote reflects this process of legitimizing deviant activity. Feather's image of strippers changed once she had a contact involved in the sex industry. She previously had an image of strippers as being:

> "...like what you see in movies...which is like really trashy, blond hair bimbo being like followed by some scary guy home. Like she's dumb and she's walking home from the strip club and she gets followed home and gets raped. And you know these were the images that you were fed. You know like really trashy women but when she (Feather's friend) returned (from San Francisco) she was like 'oh my god, I went to this party with all these women who were strippers and they were

all like college students or artists or writers or people like…girls like ourselves. And they're making money and they're dancing.' I started to have more of an intrigue." (Feather)

The contributing factors to the occupational choice of nude dancing build off of one another rather than being mutually exclusive. The initial intrigue was not considered a viable option without a contact.

Economic Rewards

Similar to previous research (Skipper & McCaghy, 1970; Boles & Garbin, 1974; Carey et al, 1974; Enck and Preston, 1988; Thompson & Harred, 1992) the women suddenly became aware of the economic gain from stripping through their contacts. Although the women had previous knowledge of the monetary rewards of dancing, there wasn't a clear conception of how much money could really be made in the industry.

"I had no idea I was going to be making the kind of money that I make now...Definitely, no clue. Feather (her contact) always had money and was always taking me out to lunch but I had no idea I could make $300, $500, $800 a shift. No clue." (Haley)

Some women simply realized they could make money in an activity that closely resembled their own lifestyle. Many were already involved in and enjoyed the

sexual banter between men and women in night clubs and found that nude dancing

was a way to get paid for something they already enjoyed doing. For instance, one

dancer said she started dancing because of:

> "...the money. I was hanging out at bars, flirting with
> men any ways...for free. The money at first, and then I
> thought I might hate it. Then when I actually started
> dancing it was something...drinking, getting your drinks
> for free, having cash in your garter every night. It was
> excellent...you get paid to party" (Roxanne).

Consistent with past literature (Boles & Garbin, 1970; Carey et al., 1974;

Thompson & Harred, 1992) the initial motivating factors, as previously discussed are

1) an initial intrigue 2) a contact present and 3) an awareness of economic gain. The

following section will discuss motivational factors for continuance of nude dancing.

These include income opportunities and flexible schedules.

Motivations for remaining in the industry

Examining motivational factors for the continuation of nude dancing is

difficult because the point at which continuance begins is unclear (Forsyth & Deshotel,

1998). The delineation between entrance and continuance was not defined in this

study. Participants worked as nude dancers for at least one year and were simply

asked, "what keeps you dancing?"

As the title of the study suggests, the question this study sought to answer is 'do women continue to dance for the economic rewards?'

> "We're doing this because we want to make the money
> and we need the money. Let's be real...let's be honest."
> (Susie)

Money is a main motivator for continuing to dance nude. However, it is not simply the money itself that is a motivating factor but rather what privileges this job brings to these women's lives. The women in this study worked an average of 16.5 hours per week with an average income of $450. The money they make allows them the free time to participate in other activities like music or writing or motherhood that more traditional low-skilled jobs do not offer. They enjoy the flexibility of an occupation that pays well for a small amount of work.

> "It's the flexibility...a lot of money with little work."
> (Barb)

> "If you think of all the things people are doing for
> money and how much time they waste everyday. It's not
> necessarily power...it's a better way when you have
> more free time to invest your time in things you really
> care about and that's what I think gives me a source of
> power." (Tori)

The easy money and free time afforded to these strippers created what they referred to as 'the trap.' They felt trapped between the lure of these benefits and the occasional negative feelings they had towards the work.

> "I'd do it for a while, four months and then I'd stop and think this is too intense and then I'd think, 'I have to do it again'." (Trixie)
>
> "Oh…the trap. It's easy. Once you accept it up here (points to head) you can fly through it, you can do it. You go through periods, every dancer goes through 'I can't take it anymore' but when you're not in those downfalls you're o.k. with it. It's easy money, it's flexibility…it keeps you there." (Natasha)

Although the women refer negatively to this as 'the trap', Sloan (1997) contends that 'experimenters' have the most freedom to leave stripping because of their educational background and possible work options. However, certain privileges that accompany stripping do make it an attractive alternative to other mainstream, more structured occupations.

> "You get a lot of the benefits that usually someone who's worked real hard at a job for twenty years has. You know...like freedom to go 'I don't want to work for a week' and take that off and still be able to go back and have your job. Or work really hard for a couple of months and then a few months off. You know, for other jobs that really require no skills you don't have that freedom. I'm trying now, I'm brainstorming on some sort of thing where I can have that same kind of freedom and still keep bringing in money, but it's hard. It is really hard." (Roxanne)

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> "Being able to live that lifestyle...which for me was work six months and then I would take six months off and I could do that. I'd travel. That's what I love to do. And stripping made it all possible. And I wouldn't change it for anything." (Jasmine)

Although money was not a sole motivator for the entrance into stripping, it has become a motivator to continue. Their lifestyle depends on it. The issue of money is complex because money reflects not only the flexibility it provides the women but also the attention the customers give to the dancers. This attention is also an incentive or a 'trap' to continue.

> "...the flirtation...they are so into you. It's a whole ego boast and then you're like 'thanks for the money- bye.' It's fantastic...the attention is addicting." (Roxanne)
> "Yeah, very." (Jasmine)
> "So, it's more than just that money?" (moderator)
> "It becomes more of an issue of the addiction to the attention...definitely." (Susie)
>
> "It's a monetary value. That's the way that you're shown you're being appreciated and if it dries up, then you're not being appreciated...why stay?" (Lacey)

It is exactly this economic element that Radical feminists deem coercive. They claim that women are economically pushed into an occupation due to the lack of alternatives. Furthermore, they contend that women are coerced to engage in demeaning and degrading behavior. However, when examining this argument there are underlying issues that have been criticized by the Sex Positive feminists. They

contend that the Radical feminists stance towards sex work 1) denies the fact that some women's economic, educational and social situation can provide them with the ability to make a 'free' choice and 2) fails to recognize the subjectivity of defining behavior as 'denigrating' and 'demeaning'.

As previously mentioned, the women in this study had educational levels that could provide them with alternative work if they were to choose. Furthermore, the women perceived their choice as freely made. It is clear for this sample the claim about sex work being economically coerced does not apply. However, because of the amount of money earned for the amount of time working, the women report being enticed to stay in the industry.

As for the second critique, it is through our interactions with others that we construct reality and meanings rather than an objective meaning (Berger & Luckman, 1963). Although affected by the larger culture, people use individual background assumptions and life experiences to define what is real. Therefore, different people define reality differently. Whereas Radical feminists deem nudity and the creation of a sexual fantasy for remuneration as demeaning, the women in this study did not describe their reality in those terms.

> "There's nothing wrong with it. It's just visual stimulation- there shouldn't be anything wrong with it...it's not like you're degrading yourself. You know your limits; you border. Your don't cross your self-line. You know where to stop within your self. Nudity? Nothing's wrong with nudity. If you have self-respect at the same time, you'll be fine" (Natasha).

The women in this sample defined their work not in terms of coercion or degradation, but as a service occupation in which the body is simply another bartering tool that is marketed and sold.

> "You've got a set of resources, they've got a set of resources and it doesn't have to be bad. I mean our bodies are our resources just as much as our minds. There's nothing wrong with that but they [radical feminists] are really saying that's wrong, that's cheap and that's stupid" (Tori)

> "I wish I didn't have to do anything to make financial ends meet" (Natasha)
> "Work's work" (Tori)
> "Its still work for me." (Natasha)

This quote illustrates the women do not view sex work as a degrading occupation. In fact, the women in this study defined other occupations as more degrading than stripping because of the low level of control and the amount of money earned.

> "It's [stripping] easy money and its flexibility…you go back to a minimum wage job and your like 'what the hell am I doing? Forty hours and I'm making a hundred bucks" (Natasha).
> "And you're killing your brain in the process" (Tori)
> "To me that's much more degrading. If you want to talk about degradation..." (Natasha)
> "...more degrading" (Tori)
> "...much more because you're not in control there. You're not in control of your own stage" (Mary Lisa)

"You're not in any control there" (Natasha)
"They're not paying you to be fabulous...they're paying
you because you're cheap fucking labor" (Tori)
(all agree)

Although money is a motivator to continue, it is not the sole reason women dance nude. This theme of 'control[ing] your own stage' is the overall reward the dancers expressed in the focus groups.

Pearlin et al. (1981) defines control or mastery as the "extent to which people see themselves as being in control of the forces that importantly affect their lives." This sense of control was present while the women were dancing, as well as in their private lives.

Using the grounded theory technique of 'grouping themes,' the following themes were identified as being related to the main theme of 'control.' They are 1) erotic power 2) economic independence and 3) emotional confidence.

Erotic power

Consistent with Ronai's study (1989) on customer-stripper interaction each step of the stripping ritual provides women a sense of being in 'control of their stage.' The following section will demonstrate how a woman's use of her sexuality provides her with a sense of control.

The purpose of the stripper is to make money for the club (through drink sales) while simultaneously earning money for herself through tips. The intent of the customer is to experience and fulfill some sort of sexual fantasy. Both stripper and customer employ techniques in order to accomplish each one's purpose for being in the strip club (Ronai, 1989). The main technique by both parties is flirtation and sexual banter which creates a 'counterfeit intimacy' in which both parties mask their real intent for being in the club (Foote, 1954).

> "Being able to pull the wool over their eyes gives you a sense of empowerment. Like letting them really believe that you really *did* care and they really *did* have a chance at becoming your boyfriend when this was all over and knowing inside that I'm *gay*. So there's certain experiences of deception that can be somewhat empowering." (Feather)

This technique of 'pull[ing] the wool over their eyes' is used both on and off stage. During her routine on stage, the dancer performs a 'tease' at which time she slowly and progressively disrobes to music (Aldridge, 1970) to maintain the fantasy of sexual availability to the customers.

> "It's incredible the power that you have when you get on stage and you've got the whole room looking at you. You're in control, man" (Jasmine)
>
> "In the sex industry, if you know your shit then…yeah, you have the power. When you can control them like that. It's that sexual power of he wants it; you got it and

> you don't have to give it to him. Yeah, it's a very real
> sense of power." (Lacey)

Customers interested in the particular woman dancing sit 'on the rack' (the table

surrounding the stage) and tip the dancers. Although a customer has the right to refuse

to tip, it is customary for him to leave the rack if he is not tipping. The women report

that those who deviate from this norm are, at times humiliated by the dancer. This

attempt to regulate tips and the behavior of the customer is a way for the dancer to

exert control.

> "I've gone up to guys who aren't tipping and asked
> them why…they get embarrassed" (Haley)

Off stage, the 'tease' or the attempt to 'pull the wool over their eyes' continues. In

between each dance set women either sit with the customers or are available for table

dances. Table dances consist of a woman dancing for a specific customer either in a

partitioned area or in a private room, depending on what the law permits. This close

contact creates a higher level of 'intimacy' and consequently, costs more money for

the customer. Reportedly, dancers earn the majority of their money from table dances

(Ronai, 1989).

> "The great thing about dancing, you can flirt as much as
> you wanted to with no commitment" (Roxanne)
> "Exactly" (Susie)
> "It's fantastic. Giving someone a table dance is like
> having a one night- stand with none of the bad sex

usually involved. The flirtation, they are so into you, it's a whole ego boast and then you're like 'thanks for the money- bye.' It's fantastic—the attention is addicting." (Roxanne)

"Yeah, very." (Jasmine)

Law strictly prohibits physical contact between customer and stripper, but depending on the club and the personal boundaries of the woman this 'no-touch' rule fluctuates. But it is the dancer's prerogative. The following quote reflect that this sense of control is unique to the club environment; that the women do not experience the same level of control outside of the club.

"The club environment is very pro-woman, actually. Because women have the ultimate control there. It's reverse sexism. I can touch you if I want to but if you touch me in a way that I'm not comfortable with I can have you kicked out. Or if you say something that offends me at all I can tell the doorman and he can kick you out." (Roxanne)

"And it's funny because if you go to a regular bar and someone touches you or is grabbing you or coming on to you there's nothing you can do about it. You're totally susceptible to whatever their whims are. Whereas in the strip bar, if someone's talking down to you, hopefully your club will kick them out...if you're in a decent club." (Jasmine)

The dancers' ability to use their sexuality in a powerful way provides the women in this study with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Extrinsically, the dancer uses her sexuality to gain economic independence. This ability for the dancer to earn money through her sexuality provides her with internal rewards such as a

positive body image and high self-esteem. Furthermore, the ability to exert her sexuality on *her* terms ("I can touch you, you can't touch me") provides the dancer with the ability to set and maintain boundaries in her private life.

Economic Independence

The final stage of the customer-stripper interaction is the exchange of money. Sex Positive feminists claim sex work can be financially empowering when a woman controls a valuable commodity for which a man is willing to pay (LeMoncheck, 1997).

> "It is pretty amazing when you have that one guy staring at your eyes, he's just flabbergasted by you. Maybe it's the atmosphere; maybe it's because he's away from the wife...something you did clicked in this guy's head. It's not that you want this person, it's not that you need this person to boost your ego but it just feels good to say 'I'm me and this person really likes to look at me and this is what I do.'" (Natasha)
> "And you get paid for it." (Mary Lisa)
> "And I get paid for it." (Natasha)

But as Jasmine points out, this monetary exchange is the nature of the job. It isn't necessarily reflective of the control the dancer has over the customer.

> "Well, that's what stripping *is*...that's what it is. You strip and you get money." (Jasmine)

Radical feminists contend that while women may be making a lot of money stripping they are degrading themselves and consequently, being humiliated and emotionally harmed (MacKinnon, 1988; Dworkin, 1988; Barry, 1995). Feminists can agree that sex work has had a negative effect on some women (Chapkis, 1997). However, Sex Positive feminists believe that some women who perform sex work, can have a positive experience and receive rewards in addition to money (LeMoncheck, 1997; Nagle, 1997; Chapkis, 1997). The following findings partially support both claims.

> "The ego thing...it's really good for your ego to have these guys...you're on a pedestal. You're on the pedestal because you're on stage. The fact that they're noticing you and you're the goddess right now. It's good for the ego...tell me how beautiful I am again. Tell me how pretty do [sic] I look..." (Lacey)
>
> "I think to a certain degree I'd almost recommend dancing for a short period of time to any women. Because it really does help your self-esteem. Because...whatever you look like you're someone's...(Roxanne)
>
> "...their fantasy, their dream girl" (Jasmine)
>
> "Exactly. Their dream girl" (Roxanne)

Emotional Rewards

Characterizing parts of the self in terms of power and confidence is reflective of cognitive self-esteem (Smelser, 1989). The women defined self-esteem in terms of body image, which they discovered through dancing doesn't necessarily mean fitting

societies standard of beauty. As Ronai (1989) reports, having a 'centerfold' body does not always equate earning a lot of money. Rather, it is the dancer's presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) that is a crucial factor in a customer's decision to tip. In society, however, women are socialized that to be sexually attractive, it is not behavior that constitutes 'success' but rather maintaining the standard of thinness and height (Wolf, 1991). Although the body size measurements were not taken for this study, an observer could notice that the women varied in terms of size. Some women in this sample reported that because they didn't have the 'centerfold' figure they had struggled with body image prior to stripping. The dancers perceive that they are in control of the activities within the club and research has shown a relationship between locus of control and a woman's level of body satisfaction (Garner et al, 1976; Mable et al, 1986). As Tori and Trixie express, *it was through stripping that this positive body image emerged.*

> "It can be empowering in terms of body issues. Females in society have always been told subconsciously that your body's bad, that your sexuality's bad all through history. When I finally got on stage I was like 'some guy likes my huge fucking ass that has caused me to be anorexic and bulimic and to waste years of my life dieting of thinking about calories or whatever. And these guys are paying me 20s and 50s *especially* for that.' It was shocking. It was like fireworks going off." (Tori)

> "The times that I was working in the fantasy booths I had the best body image of any time in my life. I totally had problems with eating disorders and all of that but when I was dancing and when I was showing my naked body to men, it all went away. I was totally comfortable

with my body and I'd go and work out and take care of myself and eat well but I wouldn't get hysterical about it." (Trixie)

The women reported that having a high level of self-esteem and a strong sense of control within the strip club also affected their social interactions with people in their every day life. They reported an ability to set boundaries and limits that they couldn't maintain before. The following quotes express this:

"I'm a hell of a lot more assertive. With stripping, I sort of came to terms with what I wanted and what I needed out of a person and a relationship and I became a hell of a lot better at asking for it. That's what I took from it [stripping]. I got this attitude-- 'I don't have to take any shit from anybody here [strip club]. Why am I taking shit from anyone in my day-to-day experiences'" (Mary Lisa)

"I learned how to interact with people, specifically men in a manner where I always feel like I'm in control. Before I began dancing, I wouldn't know how to control the power logistics in a situation even if it was conversationally or whatever. Now I know what my boundaries are and I know how to make them clear to somebody and to back those up. I know how to tell someone to fuck off. I didn't know how to do that before." (Roxanne)
"...and not feel bad about it." (Susie)
"...and not feel bad about it. 'You're in the wrong here, I'm not.' And I think that's great. It's a fantastic tool to learn. A lot of women go their whole lives and not know how to do that." (Roxanne)

Effects of Economic Instability

The women in this study also report oppressive elements with the exchange and the fluctuation of money. Money is the mechanism for the customer to show appreciation of the dancer. Although the dancers can attempt to employ techniques to ensure "close to total control of the interaction" (Ronai, 1989 p. 457) they express that this power play and this constant "presentation of self" (Goffman, 1963) for economic gain can at times be tiresome and psychologically damaging.

> "Do I have to consciously shift [into the stripper persona]? Yeah, definitely. I have to get myself up for it." (Susie)
> "When you can't make that shift and you have to go to work…it's really damaging to you psychologically." (Roxanne)
> "And that entails smiling and making sure you're smiling otherwise you're not going to make *any* money. You've got to be happy, you've got to talk to people. You can't go sit in a corner, or the dressing room. You've got to go talk and that takes a lot of energy." (Jasmine)
> "Does it ever" (Susie)

When a dancer doesn't make money (whether it is due a failure in the 'presentation of self' or for other unknown reasons) the lack of attention has the potential to affect how she views herself. The women must constantly balance the external factor of money with their self-esteem.

> "Lately at work it's been real depressing. In fact I quit last week…threw the towel in. I'm too old for this and thought it's time for a real job." (Lacey)

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> "But don't you think you'd feel a lot happier if you were walking out with money. Isn't that ultimately what it's about?" (Susie)
> "It's amazing how the lack of money makes your self-esteem plummet. You have to think 'o.k. It's right before taxes; that's why I'm not making any money.' But if you leave the club with ten dollars, you're like 'I'm ugly, I'm fat' or whatever. And it doesn't make any sense and then you realize it does really have an emotional hold on you. It's not just the money." (Roxanne)

Women report as well that this exchange and fluctuation of money has the ability to challenge their boundaries.

> "The money...it's empowering. The last few shifts there's been some guy who's been giving me 10s and 20s and 50s." (Tori)
> "Me too" (Mary Lisa)
> "Then it starts to be like 'how much does this guy want...I have to go talk to him.' You kind of mold yourself to what they want and that's the real challenge and what's really draining about the job." (Tori)
> "...they [the customers] want more. (Mary Lisa)
> "'Does this guy want his sister, does he want his mother, does he want a friend to talk to?'" (Tori)
> "And that's the part where the control starts to sort of shift hands...when they start to give you more money and you get the guilty conscious and you think 'I have to go and talk to this person.'" (Mary Lisa)

When economic instability occurs, the women reported using mental and verbal techniques as an attempt to regain their sense of control. As Roxanne stated she has to rationalize that the lack of tipping may be a result of some external reason, like tax day.

Overview

The women in this study report the main motivating factor for nude dancing is money. However, the issue of money emerged from the focus groups as being more complex—as being more than 'just the money.' Money provides the women with a lifestyle that is flexible with little responsibility. Barb's comment, "it's [stripping] empowering so I can live an extravagant lifestyle on my own" is reflective of what money brings to these women's lives. In certain instances it is this lifestyle that motivates the women to continue dancing. At other times, it is what the money *reflects* that is the main motivator. Money indicates the attention the dancers receive from the patrons. Roxanne's statement about table dances illustrates how these two rewards (money and attention) are intricately wound. "A table dance…thanks for the money. The attention is addictive." Both the attention and the money are motivators for the women to continue dancing nude.

Nude dancing allows the women the ability to use their sexuality in a powerful, profitable way and on *their* terms. The relation between customer- stripper where the woman manipulates the interaction contributes to a sense of control both within the strip club and in the women's personal lives. This sense of control is achieved through the women's awareness and use of erotic power, and results in: 1) economic independence, 2) emotional confidence.

The women in this study earn, on average $450 for 16.5 hours of work per week. In a society in which women earn only approximately two-thirds the income

earned by men (Osberg, 1987), sex work is a profitable way for a woman to earn a living. But it is this economic element that Radical feminists claim coerces women into a degrading and harmful occupation. The women in this study perceive that their educational background provided them with occupational alternatives and the ability to make a free choice. The women express that they are taking advantage of the profits in a capitalistic economy with few negative affects. Nude dancing provides them with economic rewards and flexibility in their lifestyles that other occupations do not. They describe their work in terms of bodily barter without any sense that they are degrading themselves.

But it is more than being employed in a high paying job that the women find rewarding. A paradox exists in regards to the use of women's sexuality in society. On one hand, women have been socialized that their sexuality can be used for personal gain. Nonetheless, women are scorned for doing so (LeMoncheck, 1998). Sex work provides the women in this study with the ability to use their sexuality for personal and economic gain and rather than negative effects, they gain emotional confidence that includes high self-esteem and the ability to set and maintain boundaries.

The interaction between the dancer and the customer, in which the dancer has the power to control the dealings, provides the women with emotional confidence. The ability to 'take' money from the customers reflects the attention that they receive. This attention results in the women having high self-esteem. In a society that pressures women to maintain a standard of beauty that is unachievable by many, these

women have discovered through nude dancing that regardless of their body size, they are sexually desirable and have the ability to earn money with their bodies. Furthermore, because of the constant boundary setting within the interaction between customer and stripper, they have learned how to set and maintain boundaries in their private lives. The women carry this emotional confidence outside of the strip club and find the skills they learn within the context of nude have the ability to affect their private and personal lives.

However, these intrinsic rewards are intricately wound with the monetary compensation for dancing nude. In the absence of economic stability the intrinsic rewards are not strong and do not last. For instance, when a woman is not making any money it has the ability to tamper with her body image and her boundaries. Consequently, she must use either verbal or mental techniques as an attempt to regain control. Verbally, the dancer can tell the customer who attempts to use money as a tool to cross her boundaries that "there is no 'how much'…to cross that line" (Haley). Or she can alter her boundaries for economic gain as illustrated by Barb. "I'm always gonna [sic] sit with them [the customer]…if they're gonna pay me." The women also have to use mental negotiations to regain control. As Roxanne remarked about money affecting body image, "you [the dancer] have to think, 'o.k. it's right before taxes, that's why I'm not making any money."

The findings in this study partially support Sex Positive feminism. The women in this study perceived their choice as consensual, simply choosing an occupation

within the patriarchal society that provides them with the highest rewards—'fast money' for little work. The women do not view their occupation in terms of degradation and consistent with Sex Positive feminism, do not view their objectification as negative and victimizing. They acknowledge that the role of 'object' and of 'subject' changes within the interaction. The objectification involved in nude dancing was viewed as positive and it is that very objectification that provides them with economic rewards and high self-esteem. Furthermore, they do not consider themselves always in the role of 'object'. At times within the customer-stripper interaction, they view the customer as the 'object'. As Torie stated, "we treat them like a bank."

However, the claim made by Sex Positive feminists that women are "sexual subjects to determine the terms and conditions of their work" was not fully supported by this study. At times, they feel a sense of control because they are in control of the customer and stripper interaction. This control is illustrated by economic rewards. When they are financially successful this provides them with a sense of control both sexually and economically. This leads to an increase in their self-esteem and ability to set personal boundaries. However, the fact that the customer ultimately controls the flow of money, through tipping creates a situation in which she can not "determine the terms...of [their] her work." The ability for her income to fluctuate affects her self-esteem and boundaries. When she is not making money, she questions the sexual attractiveness of her body and at times shifts her boundaries in order to receive the

money that provides her with both external (financial independence) and intrinsic (self-esteem) rewards.

The women have chosen to gain power within the socially constructed reality of the male entertainment industry. Through this they have increased their self-esteem and their sense of control. These rewards come from the stripping setting and need to be constantly reinforced with monetary gain. The lack of attention, which is measured by money, can lead to a decrease in self-esteem and control demonstrating that their Sex Positive identities are indeed unstable and rest upon a financial success ratio. Sex Positive feminists seek to promote the legitimacy of stripping as an occupation, free from societal stigmatization. They assert when this legitimacy is fully realized, women in the industry will be more politically powerful and may seek to change the oppressive element of tipping.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the polarization in the feminist debate regarding sex work is not clearly reflected in the actual lives of sex workers. Rather than sex work being either oppressive *or* empowering, there exist both elements in the occupation of nude dancing.

Chapter V

Discussion

The highlights of the findings, patterns and limitations are discussed in this chapter. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will address the overall findings. Limitations to this study will be discussed in section two. Finally, in the third section, recommendations are provided.

Highlights of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that contribute to the occupational choice of nude dancing. An attempt was made to divide motivational factors for entrance from motivational factors for the continuance. Furthermore, this study was an attempt to provide insight into any rewards other than money that women may receive from nude dancing.

Three variables were present with the initial occupational choice for nude dancing. They are 1) an intrigue, 2) a contact, and 3) an awareness of economic gain through nude dancing. Contrary to previous literature (McCaghy & Skipper, 1970;

Carey et al, 1974; Boles & Garbin, 1974; Forsyth & Deshotels, 1998) these women perceived they had alternative occupational choices due to their educational level.

The women in this study continue to strip because of the ease of earning money for a small amount of work and the flexibility that provides. This enables the women to pursue activities that they deem more important than work, such as motherhood, art or travel.

The women reported that stripping provided them a sense of 'control' over situations within the strip club as well as in their private lives. Using their sexuality to earn money provided them with economic independence as well as a high level of self-esteem and the ability to set boundaries and limits. The women reported that these rewards were gained *through stripping*.

The issue of money as a motivating factor is complex because the money the women earn reflects the attention they receive from the patrons. These two rewards (money and attention) are intricately interwoven and have the potential to effect both positively and negatively internal rewards (body image and emotional confidence).

Limitations

The results of this study described the experiences of nude dancing from the perspective of the twelve women who participated in this study. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the results can not be applied to the population of nude dancers.

Furthermore, regardless of the methodology, when feminists views are considered, we are cautioned that there is no single female or feminist perspective (Minnow, 1993). The issue of gender is so cross-cut by variables such as ethnicity, class and situation (Minnow, 1993) that it is unreasonable to assume that all nude dancers will have the same perspective or experience. 83% of the women in this study either had some college education, a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree. This is a unique sample with the study of nude dancers. Past research (McCaghy & Skipper; Boles & Garbin, 1974) indicates the majority of nude dancers lack higher education. The social location of any one woman will effect how she views herself and her experiences. Ignoring this "may put privileged women in the position of speaking for women whose experience they do not share" (Bell, et al., 1998).

The locations of each club may have had an affect on the responses by the women. The women who participated in the San Francisco focus group were employed at a club that charged each dancer $250.00 per shift. The women in this focus group spoke more negatively about stripping than the two in Portland, where there are no stage fees. However, no other focus groups were conducted in San Francisco therefore it is impossible to assume that this high stage fee is the reason their attitudes differed from the women in Portland.

Suggestions for Future Research

This exploratory research has identified several topics on which future research is possible. For example, examining what variables contribute to a dancer experiencing sex work as liberating and pleasurable. This study was comprised mainly of women with higher education; however, it can not be assumed that a causal relationship exists between education level and a positive experience from nude dancing, because comparative studies were not explored. A future study could identify other variables such as the type of club, the relationships between the dancers, and the location of the club. For instance, grassroots organizations promoting the legitimacy of sex workers were present in both sites chosen for this study. This may have contributed to the positive experience these women received from dancing.

The possible link between stigma perception and locus of control could be explored further. The women in this study were aware of the overall stigma associated with nude dancing, but, contrary to previous literature (Thompson and Harred, 1992), the dancers did not attempt to negotiate their stigmatized status. The majority of the women in this study revealed to people they deemed important (parents or friends) their occupation of nude dancing regardless of the consequence. Thoits (1995) contends that the level of control one has over their life has the potential to change one's perception of stigma. This needs further examination; perhaps the women did not perceive the stigma because the stigma surrounding nude dancers is less in Portland or San Francisco. As Roxanne stated, "we're spoiled in Portland."

Since this study found that tipping from the customer had the potential to affect the dancer's self-esteem, it would be interesting to determine how a stabilized income would affect the dancers. Further research needs to be conducted on the role unionization could play in creating an environment free of the oppressive element of tipping. San Francisco's "Lusty Lady" is the only unionized strip club in the United States. A comparative study could be conducted to determine the effect economic stability has on nude dancers.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Consent Form

I,_____, agree to take part in this research project. Elaine Vance has informed me that the purpose of the study is to explore reasons women dance nude and to do so by gathering data from our point of view.

I understand that:
1. I can withdrawal from this study at any time.
2. The names of all people, the taped interview and the transcripts in this study will remain confidential.

Elaine has offered to answer any questions I have about the study and what I am expected to do. I have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study.

Date:

Signature:

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study, please contact either the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, I I I Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182 or Elaine Vance at 3130 SE Yarnhill Portland, Oregon 97214, (503) 235-4602

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Interview Guide

I: When did you first start stripping?

II: How did you first become interested in stripping?

LISTEN FOR
   Money
   Deviant element of the job
   Contacts in the subculture
   Other

III: All of you have been stripping for more than a year ... What you mentioned before are the reasons you initially started dancing, but what keeps you dancing? What do you like about your job?

LISTEN FOR
   Money
   Flexible schedule
   Other

PROBES
The money? Tell me more about that? How does that positive element fit into the whole picture?

LISTEN FOR
   The actual money the dancers receive
   The ability to 'take' money from the customer
   Other

IV: So, those are aspects of the job itself, but what about the dancing itself? How do you feel when you are dancing?

LISTEN FOR
   Empowerment
   Power over the customers
   Personal enjoyment

Self-expression
Sense of sexuality
Other

PROBES
The power over the customers? What kind of power do you feel? Tell me more about that.

LISTEN FOR
power over them financially
power over customers sexually

PROBE
Does that sense of power/control extend to your relationships in other areas of your life outside of the strip club?

PROBE
The empowerment? Tell me more about how stripping makes you feel empowered?

LISTEN FOR
heightened self-esteem
security with sexuality/womanhood

PROBE
Do you feel that same sense when you are not stripping? Is it present in your daily life?

V: Do any of you have any other comments concerning what we've discussed? What are your future plans? Do you plan on continuing to strip?

Thank you very much for your participation. You're input has been very helpful for this research project. I appreciate your time and insights.