Sexual Intercourse: A Feminist Reading of Strip Joint Discourse

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Title: Sexual Intercourse: A Feminist Reading of Strip Joint Discourse

The discursively-constructed stereotype of stripper plays an important role in the ideology that sustains our system of sexual relations. This construction also interacts with and constrains the lived reality of actual women who earn their living in the stripping industry. This research attempts to examine this interaction by exploring the discourse that is generated by stripping industry participants. A long interview transcript is analyzed as a text to develop a feminist reading that focuses on the socio-cultural forces that make a particular story possible as well as necessary to tell. This story emerges, through the first-person account of a dancer-informant, as a form of moral resolution, an attempt to establish her "goodness" in the world. In deconstructing this story, however, it becomes clear that the elusive goodness for which she strives obligates her to self-defeating and self-subjugating behavior, and that this behavior is an important feature of strip joint interaction. Implicit in this finding is how the ideological nature of heterosexual conventions relies upon the exploitation of women's morality.
SEXUAL INTERCOURSE:
A FEMINIST READING OF STRIP JOINT DISCOURSE

by
REGINA MARIE HOWARD YAROCH

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

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Introduction

Undeniably, the title of this work is attention-getting. That's because the meaning most commonly attached to the word intercourse, especially as modified above, is sexual activity, or heterosexual coitus to be more precise, a subject of strong cultural, if not universal, interest. Yet in The American Heritage Dictionary this definition appears only as a secondary one, while the primary meaning is established as the "interchange between persons or groups;" in other words, collective public behavior. From a critical perspective, this bifurcation of meaning can be seen as more than lexical happenstance, more than an innocent shift of nuance. It can be seen also as evidence of how sex has been established as a public rather than a private activity, and thus positioned within the sphere of daily life long controlled and dominated by men. Further, the subtlety of this maneuver suggests how undetectably this has occurred. Under this masculine control, a system of heterosexual relations has developed, a system that regulates the talk about sex, organizes the conventions by which it happens, and establishes contexts in which it can and should occur. In
other words, a discourse of sex has emerged, a body of talk and communication practices grounded in an ideology that privileges male interests at the expense of females' and represents the sectional pleasures and desires of males as universal (Daniluk, 1991). Stated bluntly, heterosexual conventions have been used to simultaneously construct and disguise women's sexual oppression (Jackson, 1987; Schneider and Gould, 1987).

An examination of the system that orders and convenes heterosexual relations reveals a number of ideological constructions: the so-called "scientific" conceptualization of male sexuality as an innate biological drive (Jackson, 1987); the model of female sexuality as a passive and desireless condition capable of being "awakened" by penile "instruction" (Miller and Fowlkes, 1980); and the good woman/bad woman dichotomy, where the normative woman, the one who is both virtuous and compliant and therefore appropriate to marry, is contrasted by the deviant, fully-sexual woman, who, because of the unnatural and therefore immoral character of her overt sexuality, may be justifiably objectified, exploited, purchased, and raped (Mullings, 1994). While the cultural discourse of sex has been used to construct and popularize idealized versions of both the good woman and the bad woman (Beck, 1988; Mullings), this paper is concerned with the latter, and more specifically, with one particular form of the bad woman, the stripper.
The Discourse of Stripper

Little more than a cursory examination of the stripper, the strip-tease dancer, the topless dancer, etc., is needed to identify the elements that go into making her up ("her" in this case referring to a discursive construction). Common experience, popular media, and scholarly literature attest to the stigma assigned to nude dancers (Thompson and Harred, 1992), the association of nude dancing with prostitution and other illegal practices (Ronai and Ellis, 1989; Salutin, 1971; Skipper and McCaghy, 1978), and the practice of performing under a stage name to conceal one's "real" identity (McCaghy and Skipper, 1972). D'Andre (in McCaghy and Skipper, 1972, pp. 369-370) summarizes this stereotype:

(Strippers) are widely believed to be engaged in a host of peculiar, atypical, aberrant, offbeat forms of activity. In the laymen's view, the stripper is an underworld figure who inhabits the dark places of the urban community. She is thought to consort with various hoodlums, hustlers, drug addicts, pimps, prostitutes, and other disreputable characters who populate the 'tenderloin' area of the large city.

Yet these same sources (with the exception of the literature) also reveal a cultural infatuation with the notion of the bright college student dancing long into the night to earn precious tuition dollars and the misguided woman with a heart of gold lured into an unseemly profession only by the direst of circumstances — which she will eventually
overcome. In addition, strippers are popularly (and for the most part erroneously) believed to be handsomely compensated for what is seen as undemanding work, and thus the recipients of "big" or "easy" money. They have also, through our cultural lexicon, been given a measure of respectability with the popularization of the term "exotic dancer" — or rather apparent respectability, as the more prestigious label does not undo the sordid stereotype of strippers, it merely disguises it.

Through this diverse and contradictory body of talk, a stereotypical portrait of strippers is generated and maintained. Perhaps even more importantly, however, is the fact that through this same body of talk, the lives and experiences of actual strippers take form. This is so because it is through discourse that individuals fashion their social identities and present themselves to the social world (Fraser, 1992). For strippers this means working with self-contradictory material that simultaneously praises and condemns them, embraces and rejects them, rewards and punishes them. In weaving their identities, then, strippers must work with thread that is flawed — thread spun on a wheel of discourse — which thwarts their efforts and disconfirms and problematizes their very existence.

1 The success of the 1990 movie Pretty Woman reveals the appeal of this theme, although Julia Roberts’ character was a prostitute, not a stripper.

2 Evidence of this can be seen in a 1996 controversy involving rape accusations against three prominent professional football players. After a police investigation in which the players were cleared, Chris Collinsworth, a network sportscaster (and former football player himself) casually exonerated the players by explaining that the accuser was an "exotic dancer."
But in addition to talk about strippers, other social practices also contribute to the body of discourse that constructs and constrains strippers. Of particular importance is the configuration of the stripping industry itself, which ordains an environment that guides and a normative climate that governs strip joint interactions, including the range of behaviors and self-presentation strategies available to strippers. Specifically, this configuration consists of two related sets of conventions: from art, the conventions of the nude and from the sex industry, those of pornography. In broad terms, both of these "filters" invoke and heavily depend on creating and maintaining a certain relationship between the viewed and the viewer, a relationship characterized by objectivity vs. subjectivity and by spectacle vs. truth (Berger, 1972; Kuhn, 1995). Briefly, both of these modes of representation rely on elevating the needs, desires, and pleasure of the viewer above those of the viewed and on offering the viewer full justification for this arrangement. But because these conventions are borrowed from other contexts, they are necessarily modified when adapted to the strip joint, which, in contrast to the static, representational nature of art and pornography, exists as a socially transacted, participatory event. This emphasis on the social, on the interactive, is especially significant because it requires stripping industry participants to themselves employ discourse, to generate talk, to participate in symbolic exchange, and to extend the preexisting cultural models of strippers and other strip joint actors. Thus, in the strip joint, there resides a set of rules and principles specific to the stripping industry, a potent combination of female
objectification and spectaclization that unfolds in a collective, collaborative effort and, in the process, produces a body of symbolic exchange, social practices, and rules of interaction that licenses who and what strippers can be and how they can behave.

This exchange, these practices and rules — and importantly, how they are experienced by strippers themselves — is the subject of this investigation. I will focus on a stripper's first person account to see how she integrates, responds to, and possibly reproduces discursive mechanisms in adopting and fulfilling her role of stripper. This focus is based on deLauretis's (1984, p. 3) argument that we must explore the codified systems of rules "that cannot but be obeyed if one is to communicate, speak, or participate in the social symbolic exchange," for it is these rules that license certain codes and these codes that establish the limits of experience. It is through what she terms the "agency of the codes" that fictional woman is constructed and it is through the lens of woman that the lived experience of women is constrained. Therefore, my intention is to consider how the stripping industry is understood and explained by industry participants and to examine the discourse generated within the strip joint setting, discourse by and about strippers themselves. Further, I intend to examine this explanation for evidence of ideological constructions, that is, the codes, conventions, and "patterns of consciousness" (Wetherell, 1986) that both order and sustain the stripping industry. In this regard, I have formulated the following research questions:
• How do industry participants account for the stripping industry and for their participation in it?
• What underlying codes, conventions, and constructions are contained in these accounts?
• How do these accounts function ideologically?

Literature Review

The stripping industry is an important subject of inquiry for at least two reasons. First, as will be presently demonstrated, the strip joint is an institution that has received little scholarly and even less critical attention, and yet it is a forum in which women's sexuality is narrowly defined, actively sought, and commercially marketed. This disinterest on the part of scholars is itself a curious absence. Perhaps, as Schneider and Gould (1987) argue, taboos against, and general lack of regard for, sex research in general have diverted attention away from the stripping industry. Or perhaps it is because when compared to prostitution, a more overt form of commercialized sex that has received significant attention, the stripping industry has seemed relatively non-problematic. But regardless of the reasons the strip joint community has escaped academic scrutiny, the implications of this oversight are clear: our failure as scholars to question, to explore, to even wonder about the stripping industry as a social institution extends, however tacitly, our support to the practices and conventions that it preserves. That these practices and conventions might
not merit preservation should be incentive enough to correct our oversight.

Secondly, the stripping industry is an important topic of inquiry because strip joint behavior is, as already suggested, collective public activity. Because it is this principle that separates the stripping industry from other modes of representation that commodify female sexuality, understanding how it interacts with other conventions is important in uncovering not only the ideology of the stripping industry, but also the overarching ideology of sexual relations that "eroticizes women's oppression" (Jackson, 1987).

This eroticization of women's oppression is a natural outcome of the arrangement by which males control the discourse of sex, a form of control that appropriates privilege by defining the codes of communication, establishing the contexts of interaction, and nullifying challenges to the system in exchange for the right to participate in it (deLauretis, 1984). Discourse, in other words, is more than a body of communication; it is a power-based system that derives its authority by legitimizing only certain kinds and certain channels of communication (Foucault, 1985; Fraser, 1989), and language is the expressive medium through which this system is constituted. Thus, language operates not representationally, but ideologically (Mumby, 1988), and has been used to construct women as certain kinds of people (Wetherell, 1986), and, in regard to this investigation, strippers as certain kinds of women. In the following discussion, which describes this construction, I adopt deLauretis'
technique of emphasizing that which discourse has produced with the use of italics. Thus *stripper* refers not to a particular occupation or a person who might fill that role, but to a mythologized construction developing through and within our cultural discourse.

Popular culture, especially mainstream cinema in the mid-1990's (*Exotica*, 1995; *Showgirls*, 1995; *Striptease*, 1996), offers a number of mythical characters that converge to form the fictional *stripper*. Although she is ambitious, sensuous, and highly sexual, it is her physical presence that is most compelling. What she offers in this regard is idealized perfection. Her breasts are voluptuous, her legs long, her face beautiful. It is this body that is offered to the fictional patrons *in* the movie, and it is this body that is offered to the real life consumers *of* the movie. So successfully is *stripper* made body and body made sexual in fictional accounts, that other dimensions to *stripper* are always startling. A letter to Ann Landers (*The Oregonian*, 1995), written by a stripper, reveals this point: "... This may surprise you, but most strippers are married and have kids. They are not porn queens, and they aren't hookers. Many are college graduates... For many, stripping is a second job." And yet, the same letter writer, in concluding her defense of strippers, returns to reinforce the construction of *stripper* as body: "... Those who think stripping is obscene should go to the beach and check out the latest swimwear. They'll see four inches of fabric held together with a string. I feel no need to apologize for my profession. It takes talent and poise to grin and bare it."
Presenting strippers in this way permits us to assume that they are without traditional feminine affect and modesty, thereby making it even more legitimate to reduce them to little more than corporeal material. And then it becomes as Foucault (1985) claims, that strippers' bodies are transformed; they cease to function as vessels embodying a self and instead begin to serve as a mystified substitution for self. In this way, *stripper* becomes only that which is visible, touchable, and marketable.

The social scientific contribution to this construction is scant but significant. As noted earlier, there is little explanation and even less critical explanation of the stripping industry, but that which does exist adds to the fictionalized portrait of *stripper*. Bryant (1977) writes that the strip club represents the "commercialization of carnality" and "salacious stimulation" for those who value visual sex as a substitute for or supplement to genuine sex. In a more extended commentary (Bryant, 1982), he chronicles the history of erotic dancing and places its origin at the "time of Salome," and credits striptease as America's contribution to this form of expression. He explains the increasing explicitness of dance shows by suggesting that it developed as an effort toward "improving the product" that topless bars were offering in the mid-1970's when print magazines began featuring greater levels of nudity. Further, he claims that the appeal of the then-scandalous topless clubs lie in satisfying male curiosity and in offering the sexual stimulation provided by the sight of "bare female breasts." Bryant concludes his historical account of stripping by declaring it is "basically a depraved occupation serving a depraved
clientele" (p. 153). Strippers, he claims are prostitutes because they exploit their bodies and their sexuality.

Bryant is not the only author to conflate nudity with eroticism (see Boles and Garbin, 1974; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970, for instance), a point that only underscores the ideological nature of sexual relations. He states that it is the dancer's nude anatomy that offers erotic entertainment and vicarious sexual gratification (Bryant, 1982). Further, he predicts that strip bars will pass into oblivion as the pornography industry grows and provides men with the vivid, explicit, visual imagery that "assuages their carnal appetites."

Most of the work on strippers by the scientific community, including Bryant's (1977, 1982) writings above, has developed out of the field of deviance studies, itself a male category\(^3\) deriving from the reification of "other", and yielding information reflective of this orientation. For example, thanks to an early publication (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970), we know that the average stripper is three inches taller than the average woman and two inches taller than the average Playboy Playmate of the Month. We also have similar statistics comparing weight, as well as the other body measurements essential for woman: bust, waist, and hips.\(^4\) In addition, Boles and Garbin (1974, p. 115) report that, "Although having a large bust may possibly predispose some girls toward the (stripping)

\(^3\) This claim is based on the understanding that while non-normativeness in the field of deviance studies is assessed and understood as an artifact of relative powerlessness, it exists only in contrast to that which is normative, which is conventionally male.

\(^4\) The authors conclude, "... as a group, (strippers') physiques are larger than average for women of their age, particularly their bust size" (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970).
occupation, this is not essential, because silicone inserts can expand breasts to almost any desired size." We also have evidence of early sexual activity on the part of strippers and an indication that some of this activity was incestuous and abusive (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970); and we know of strippers' sexual proclivity, particularly their homosexual activity (McCaghy and Skipper, 1969). Overall, we are provided a profile that includes the process of "career selection" or occupational "choice" (again male categories, given that the luxury of choice suggests intention and efficacy, which women in general and dancers in particular often lack) (Boles and Garbin; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970); attitudes of frustration, dissatisfaction, and cynicism toward the stripping industry and resentment toward the public image of strippers (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970); and a description of "strippers' loneliness (which) is accentuated by their isolation not only from conventional society but from their peers as well" (McCaghy and Skipper, 1972, p. 372). We also know of the coping devices strippers use to "manage" their deviant occupation (Skipper and McCaghy, 1978; Thompson and Harred, 1992).

Out of these writings, stripper emerges as female body, female flesh, female sex organs. She emerges as deviant and depraved, her sexuality both valued and condemned. At the same time, by virtue of her strategic coping, her sense of loneliness and isolation, and her stalwart determination in the face of numerous difficulties, she emerges as a resolute character, a cultural icon of sorts, who deserves understanding if not respect, despite the fact that she is not like us.
Finally, the construction of *stripper* is inseparable from other forms of ideological discourse, discourse that legitimizes such constructs as gender, masculinity, and femininity (Wetherell, 1986), and discourse that legitimizes sexual relations that subordinate female interests to males' (Daniluk, 1991; Jackson, 1987). As support for this claim, Wetherell offers Spender's "plus male, minus female" concept, a term that describes the process by which male qualities or possessions are automatically attributed a level of status and active agency, while female attributes and possessions are devalued and made passive. It is easy to see how this construction relates to male and female sexuality, and how both of these underlie Bryant's explanation above. Consider further the discourse of sexuality that depersonalizes sex, especially for men, and commoditizes it, especially women's. Look no further than the lyrics of popular music to hear cultural messages that proclaim intentions "to get some," "to do it," "to like that." Under this umbrella of discourse, *stripper* is but the physical embodiment of a vague but valuable commodity. But in the world of asymmetry that discourse constructs (deLauretis, 1984), as the commodity is prized, the subject is scorned.

The contribution that *stripper* makes to the ideology of sexual relations is substantial. She helps to disguise even as she contributes to the good woman/bad woman dichotomy by adopting the overtly sexual behavior for which she is simultaneously both praised and condemned. In addition, she affirms male-defined sexuality, a sexuality that disguises and
excuses power as promiscuity. Consider, for instance, these words of explanation offered by one performer in the stripping industry:

Men are funny. They get a big kick out of seeing women dressed up in frilly undergarments and acting sexy. It is a thing with them... After a woman gets married for a year or two, she thinks she has got it made. She thinks she does not have to do it anymore. She only looks pretty when she's going out, you know, for other people but really not her husband. That is why so many men come to see us. Then they go home and dream of us while they are making love to their wives. If the average housewife ever wised up, we would be out of business. But they won't. (Skipper and McCaghy, 1978).

This work that stripper does is of course not her own, but rather it is what she is used by discourse to do. As a fictional construct, stripper has neither agency nor will; though she is powerful, she is passive; though she is effective, she is not efficacious. It is only as a discursive mechanism that she develops and wields her power, most strikingly so by influencing and constraining the range of behaviors, expectations, and interactional patterns of flesh and blood strippers. This is so because eventually stripper disappears, reaching what deLauretis (1984) terms "the vanishing point," the point at which the vision of fiction as fiction blurs, where it becomes unrecognizable and thereby infuses and appears as reality. It is here that stripper yields to strippers, or rather that strippers, women themselves,
carry on the work of their fictitious ancestor. It is here that lived experience originates as discursively constrained and ideologically convened.

Given this transition from the constructed stripper to stripper as lived, from the field of discourse to the field of play, it is necessary to move from the subject of talk about strippers to talk by strippers and to ask how they adapt and respond to the discursive mechanisms concealed within the conventions of the strip joint. In this form of questioning, a reflexive questioning that asks about the reconstitutive force of discourse, it is necessary to focus attention on experience as lived and to use this as a basis for social critique. The following section outlines the theoretical principles for this claim.

Theoretical Background

Discourse Theory

The social constructivist paradigm is built on the assumption that reality is not an objective, empirical state, but that it is constituted in and through the experience of humans. As such, language is seen as the "principal medium through which social reality is produced" (Mumby, 1988), through which particular behaviors, patterns of relationships, and social organizations are legitimized and sustained. In addition, it is recognized that certain people or groups of people are more influential in constructing and perpetuating systems of signification and that these systems are used to privilege some participants and exploit others. The
issue is not how language is used to represent and construct *reality*, but rather how it is used to represent, construct, and perpetuate a *particular* reality.

Discourse theory offers a platform from which to explore and critique this situation. As a broad body of work, discourse theory assesses how language is linked to society and patterns of social arrangement. Though a particular feminist theory of discourse has yet to be fully developed, a preliminary model has been proposed by Fraser (1989, 1992), who grounds her "pragmatic model" in the works of Foucault, Habermas, Gramsci, and others. Fraser rejects the works of semioticians such as Lacan, Kristeva, and Saussure as being incompatible with the feminist goal of praxis, resistance, and emancipatory action because these theorists conceptualize language as a coherent, all-encompassing, and self-reproducing system culminating in the predetermination of human experience and the impossibility of oppositional practice and change. Instead, she finds more merit in conceptualizing discourse as a body of "historically specific, socially situated signifying practices" that are both institutionally and contextually embedded, thus linking the study of language to the study of society and the operation of power, domination, conflict, and change.

By drawing upon Fraser's preliminary theoretical hybrid, I am necessarily bracketing some issues that a more complete model would address, most notably the constituent elements of language and signifying practices and how gender is developed and reproduced through systems of
signification. It is not my contention that these issues are unimportant or unrelated to the issue of discourse, but rather that they are outside the scope of this particular project. That Fraser's model begins at the point where Foucault, Habermas, and others converge is, for the time being, sufficient for my purposes because it offers a political understanding of how social agents use language to negotiate both the private and public spheres of daily life. Though rudimentary, the model's merit lies in its relevance to the present project and in the articulation of key theoretical principles that help to identify, explain, and offer possibilities for the correction of the subordination of women and other marginalized populations.

Signification, for Fraser (1989, 1992), is seen as action rather than representation; social actors are assumed to be agents and not merely effects of discourse. People "do things" with language, which is seen as a social practice that operates — or, to be more precise, is operated — in a social context. One of the things people do with language is to fashion social identities, which exist as complexes of meanings drawn from a "fund of interpretive possibilities". In other words, language and symbolic exchange are used by individuals to develop an understanding of themselves and others, but these understandings are neither fixed nor irretrievable. While the Foucaultian notion that discourse is capable of inducing individuals to act out certain roles has merit for Fraser, she also agrees with Mumby's (1988) contention that these roles or "types" are merely fragmentary constructions and not lived, concrete individuals who
in actuality have the capacity to operate in a multiplicity of social contexts and draw upon a number of shifting and overlapping social identities. This is so because Fraser is not willing to entirely turn her back on humanistic principles, preferring to revise their shortcomings rather than reject them out of hand. For Fraser, the jury is still out on issues such as subjectivity and autonomy. She argues that the poststructuralist critique that characterizes humanism as itself a well-disguised form of discursive domination, inappropriately and on insufficient grounds rejects the humanistic dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity. At the same time, because she does not overlook the inadequacy of privileging one side of the coin over the other — subjectivity over objectivity — she is not satisfied with the traditional humanistic configuration and instead calls for a posthumanist interpretation of "man" using innovative rhetorical devices. This, she claims, will eliminate the self-defeating/competing problem of the subjectivity/objectivity construction that develops when interrogating humanism while retaining the "emancipatory impulse" upon which it is founded. In addition, she calls for a major interdisciplinary hermeneutical effort to assess and refine the humanistic ideal of autonomy and reserves the right to reject it if the results reveal that it can be linked to the subordination of women. For the time being, though, individual subjectivity and autonomy are characterized as discursive only to the extent that they develop in interaction with and response to symbolicity, and not as its post-facto artifacts (See Fraser, 1989, pp. 35-54).
Conceptualizing language as a social practice rather than as a structural system allows individuals agency in developing, using, challenging, and changing discourse. Moreover, because of this emphasis on human agency and subjectivity, the nature of discourse itself is challenged. Fraser rejects the monolithic stature of discourse suggested by semiotic theorists and instead finds it fruitful to talk of discourses in the plural, observing that society consists of multiple discursive sites and frameworks in which people operate. Specifically, she establishes "the social" as a "historically specific and relatively new" arena in which uncontained issues assert themselves and in which competing and previously separated interpretations vie for authorization. At the same time, she clearly understands that different groups of people have different levels of discursive (and nondiscursive) resources and that some discourses are more powerful and more enduring than others. She assumes the existence and deployment of hegemony, which she describes as the discursive face of power, the capacity to establish the "doxa" or common sense of a society, to distill a particular way of thinking by forcing universal experience and understanding into its own parochial conventions and categories. This means that for women as well as other subordinated groups, discourse has the potential to block particular interests, experiences, and opinions from shared expression, thereby neutralizing their significance and eliminating them as "real" (Kramarae in Baron, 1985). At the same time, and in a reconstitutive way, this outcome reinforces that body of experience and opinion already known,
represented, and accepted as knowledge, as well as the very role, nature, and value of knowledge itself. Under and within this framework, an interpretive environment develops that limits individual experience and organizes social action and interaction.

Mumby's (1988) description of this hegemonic process, i.e., how it is that social actors themselves come to act as discursive agents, follows a Giddensian explanation by focusing on the duality of structure. According to this concept, a social structure, linguistic or otherwise, is not imposed upon a group of actors; rather actors employ rules that are a part of that structure and in the process reproduce that very structure. In addition, because some rules are designed to privilege certain actors at the expense of others, power is an inevitable product of social interaction, and social actors are continually involved in maintaining, defending, and enlarging "spaces of control." The ability to control the negotiation of meaning is the key to hegemonic authority in that essentialized and conventionalized meanings obscure this ever-present power relationship, thereby legitimizing certain patterns of domination and subordination. In this way, the language used by social actors doesn't just reflect or describe existing relationships of power, it actually produces power by licensing particular systems of meaning and signification.

That power in the form of discourse operates with this type of normative force is a critical element in Fraser's (1989, 1992) model. While she appreciates the innovative Foucaultian interpretation that shows modern power as both productive and capillary, she wrings this argument
more tightly to reveal and make problematic discourse's capacity to normatively direct social interaction. To overlook or to neutralize this normative potential is to ignore the undeniable reality that social practices are necessarily norm-governed and that these practice-governing norms are an essential component of communication as they simultaneously constrain and enable expression among people. This awareness brings attention to the possibility that communication networks and social practices are themselves selectively and strategically employed. It also opens up the possibility that they are contestable.

A key aspect in Fraser's (1989, 1992) discourse model is the ability of subordinated groups to challenge hegemonic privilege, to resist, recast, or redirect social meanings, and in the process, to strengthen and expand their "spaces of control." She emphasizes the transitory and evolutionary nature of discourse by locating it in a specific historical and social time frame, which suggests that discourses are neither impervious to change nor entirely antecedent of human experience and subjectivity. And she emphasizes that social actors themselves are influential agents in initiating this change. She claims that women, for example "have remade entire regions of social discourse" as they have banded together in a "discursively self-constituted political collectivity" to modify existing and develop new political, economic, and other institutional agendas (1992). Fraser labels the sociocultural field in which this resistance occurs the Means of Interpretation and Communication (MIC), which she describes as a historically and culturally specific ensemble of discursive resources.
available to members of a given social collectivity. These resources include officially recognized idioms and vocabularies, accepted paradigms of argumentation, narrative conventions used to construct social identities, and modes of subjectification. Of course, because people have access to unequal levels of discursive and nondiscursive resources, the MIC is inherently unbalanced, a fact that flavors but does not extinguish movements of contestation. Thus, struggles over social discourse exist as continuous attempts to identify, interpret, and construct social meanings, and to assert these meanings against and above competing ones. They are evidence of what Mumby (1988) calls a "discursive consciousness," a state of awareness and agency that stimulates action, invites protest, and ultimately leads to change.

Developing this discursive consciousness begins with a challenge to academia's traditional conceptualization of knowledge as an objective, universal bank of truth and proceeds with an exploration of the relationship between language, knowledge, and power. By adopting a specifically feminist discourse model, Fraser focuses on the androcentric bias that permeates this set of relationships and how it has constrained/constructed women, and also the fact that women's experiences and realities, in that they are systematically different from men's, contain an alternative, practical knowledge emerging out of everyday life that can be released, reclaimed, and recognized. By seeking out the submerged consciousness of women's experiences and linking it to
the discursively-defined dominant reality, it is possible to liberate that which has been held bound by discourse.

**Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory is organized around exploring, explaining, and improving women's reality. In particular, four assumptions are fundamental to feminist theory: virtually all social and institutional relations are gendered; these gender relations are problematic; these relations are neither natural nor immutable, but are produced and maintained socio-culturally and are therefore subject to change; and this change can and should be made to come about (Elliot and Mandell, 1995). bell hooks (1984) admonishes mainstream — i.e., white, bourgeois — feminists for their tendency to overlook issues of race and class and cautions feminist scholars about over-generalizing experiences of the dominant group and underrepresenting those of more peripheral groups. In emphasizing the breadth of experience and the vast potential for differences that exist among women, hooks underscores the significance of individual struggle, of lived reality, of human experience as navigated and negotiated in a social world. Arising from this concern is an awareness of the omnipresent influence of social conventions, structures, and practices on women, which then prompts questions about the workings of power and control, especially as experienced by women and mediated by gender. This point brings into focus a number of parallels between feminist thought and postmodern, which in Linda Nicholson's words are "natural
allies" (in Elliot and Mandell). In addition to hook's reservations about the utility of generalizations, these parallels include the critique of scientific rationality and objectivity as androcentric constructs, the belief that such frameworks have been used to subordinate and subjugate certain segments of society, and the realization that a woman's experience is inextricably bound with her socio-cultural environment. However, despite these areas of overlap, the fit between postmodern theory and feminist theory is not uncontested, and as Fraser (1989) suggests, the jury has yet to rule on key issues in this partnership such as subjectivity and autonomy. That widespread work on these points is ongoing (and even yet to be undertaken) provides me with the permission I need to sidestep these questions for the time being and to proceed with the present project because, even in the face of this abeyance, it remains possible to examine how women interact with and understand certain social phenomena, systems, and structures and the problematic dimensions these phenomena present in the lives of women. With this preface, it remains obvious that my line of reasoning is moving toward an historical, non-essentializing theoretical approach that attempts to draw conclusions about the operation of social mechanisms rather than generalizations about women as a group or even certain groups of women.

The work that is described in the following chapters employs both feminist theory and discourse theory to examine an explanation of the stripping industry offered by two of its participants. By focusing on the actual words, stories, and descriptions of a stripper, light is shed on how
she understands and experiences the conventions of the stripping industry, and then discourse theory is used to critique the relationship between what she says and what she experiences. Chapter 2 addresses the general methodological issues and concerns that are relevant to this investigation and also describes the paradigmatic shift that occurred during the research that led to its present feminist orientation. The final chapter reports the results of the study: the interpretation of the interview data and a discussion of this interpretation.
Chapter 2: Method

**General Methodological Issues**

The interpretive paradigm rejects the epistemological basis of the functionalist paradigm and instead locates both knowledge and truth in inter-subjective experience; it assumes that researcher and researched develop a relationship, which yields a context — historical, social, and interpersonal — in which knowledge is generated and understood (Langellier and Hall, 1989). Mumby (1988) articulates a political aspect of this approach in developing his "radical" methodology, which assumes an ideological basis to traditional epistemological conceptions and establishes itself as an emancipatory alternative with the potential to reconceptualize traditional scientific principles and develop counterdiscourses in which to conduct and share inquiry. Mumby's argument establishes the basis for a blending of phenomenology and feminist methodology, which, as subsets of the interpretive paradigm, have been effectively combined by numerous scholars on the basis of their philosophical and methodological compatibility (e.g., Kapoor, 1996; Langellier and Hall, 1989; Nelson, 1989).
Feminist Methodology

With its emphasis on research's potential to operate in the interest of women, to serve as a form of liberation "by analyzing how personal experiences in women's lives are constrained by social and historical structures" (Langellier and Hall, 1989, p. 196), feminist research is inherently political. In addition, its epistemology is based on a number of assumptions. Feminist research rejects as androcentric traditional epistemological conceptions. It questions both the value and the possibility of objectivity, of universal truths, of a researcher's ability to "know" another. Feminist research recognizes a "holistic imperative," or the impossibility of separating the researcher from the researched, the knower from the known, and further emphasizes that that which is knowable by any researcher develops and emerges only through her consciousness. It contends that global generalizations are suspect in veracity, desirability, and prerogative, and it accepts as foundational the primacy of lived experience, of being-in-the-world as data (Nelson, 1989; Reinharz, 1992; Rogers, 1993).

A feminist methodology also assumes a particular ontology, labeled by both Nelson (1989) and Langellier and Hall (1989) as personalistic, which suggests that one focus of feminist research is on individual women in their everyday lives. Feminist researchers place less value on the representativeness of an informant and more on eliciting and making sense of her particular experience, thus finding integrity in recording individual subjectivity as such and rejecting positivism's claim of
"ungendered point-of-viewlessness" (Geiger, 1986). Also in this sense, everyday life itself becomes a field of resistance, a counter-concept used as a basis to critique androcentric heroic life by emphasizing reproduction, common routines, and the spheres of women, receptivity, and sociability — that which maintains and sustains the fabric of our daily lives (Featherstone, 1992). This notion suggests a sense of embeddedness, a recognition of the complex interconnectedness between individual experience in the world and social practices and institutions. Through this channel, the feminist anthem, "the personal is political," is advanced by exploring the personal as an aspect of the political, as cultural, social, and institutional forces experienced and constituted in daily life and interaction. In drawing upon phenomenology to accomplish this goal, the task for feminist researchers is to use phenomenology to "describe, define, and interpret both the personal and political, not as different kinds of experience, but as the experience of different levels of consciousness (Nelson, 1989, p. 227)."

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is both a philosophy of human beings in the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) and a qualitative methodology that provides a rigorous framework in which to explore and identify the meanings of taken-for-granted lifeworld experience. Phenomenology shares feminism's epistemological assumptions (Nelson, 1989; Langellier and Hall, 1989), as well as its personalistic ontology. To this end,
phenomenology is often summarized by the well-worn phrase originating in Husserl's writings, "to the things themselves," which suggests a focus on the primacy of individual lived experience. A central concept of phenomenology is consciousness, an individual's "very direction, intention, or mode of doing in the world. (Langellier and Hall)." As the defining characteristic of a person, conscious experience reflects a meaningful relationship between an individual and the real world she inhabits, and can therefore be explored as a channel of meaning, an intersubjective link that connects one's outer world with her inner world. By focusing on an individual's lived experience, it is possible to trace the development of meaning as a function of conversation and routine interaction, one's "being in the world," which, in turn, is the basis upon which reality is constructed.

While the concept of consciousness is fundamental to human existence/experience, an a priori aspect to consciousness exists in the form of intentionality, or those things that it is possible to become conscious of. It is through the intentionality of consciousness that one experiences in a concrete way an intersubjective link with the social world (Langellier and Hall, 1989), and it is through the extension of that moment that consciousness develops, and then subjectivity and understanding — in other words, meaning — emerge. They emerge not as pure derivatives of consciousness, but as products of the interaction between consciousness and that which is available to express it. Thus, language is an integral agent in the process of formulating, organizing, and interpreting human
experience, a process in which individuals come to know and make sense of not only themselves, but also the broad and complex world they inhabit. Consciousness, then, consists of engaging in and ordering moments of concrete experience, which are known as phenomena, and which are understood as the outer, sharable form of that which is inner and unsharable. But descriptions of this concreteness for an individual are necessarily mediated by linguistic limitations, which is why phenomena cannot be assembled directly, but can only be approached hermeneutically. For this reason, researchers speak of "moving toward a phenomenon," of attending to the words and sense-making efforts of individuals in order to travel through the channel of meaning that connects them with their experience, that links an outer world of shared exchange and signification with an inner world of experience and understanding.

Employing phenomenology politically — as required by feminist research — is both appropriate and effective. Because phenomenology understands that experience, understanding, and meaning develop discursively, it can be used to explore how these elements interact with discursive forces. By focusing on consciousness, "women's sphere of greatest freedom," (Anderson et al, 1987), phenomenology avoids being "taken in" by the very social and political constraints that constrict women on the level of interaction in their day to day lives. Especially when blended with deconstruction, phenomenology can provide the basis for a powerful critique because "(it) allows us to comprehend that which is violated by discourse, and deconstruction can reveal the discursive
mechanisms (Nelson, 1989, p. 224)." In addition, phenomenology is well-suited to feminism's political agenda in that it recognizes experience and speech as embodied. Because consciousness follows intentionality, the level where bodies, thoughts, and emotions themselves exist, the awareness of these elements is necessarily derivative, thereby encasing conscious experience within a particular body assigned a particular gender. This concept redirects attention to the link between the personal and the political and the different types as well as levels of reality. Writes Nelson (p. 225):

Women's bodies have been controlled by and described by men, for purposes prescribed by and perpetuated by men, just as the bodies/selves of prisoners and delinquents are inscribed and constrained by institutional structures of power. Due to their marginal status within dominant culture, women understand (at various levels) the games of domination and discourse because their bodies and words are mediated by, and mediators within, dominant paradigms... Women's subsequent discovery and recovery of their bodies is directly linked to the recovery of women's speaking.

Women's oral history, perhaps more than any other research method, is dedicated to this recovery.
Women's Oral History As Phenomenological Method

Phenomenology, like feminist methodology, is less a collection of specific methods and certified techniques than a methodological environment in which a variety of methods may be employed depending on the precise nature of a particular research design and the phenomenon under study. In other words, a universal phenomenological method does not exist (Nelson, 1989). Because a primary emphasis for phenomenologists is on capturing the subjective experience of a phenomenon in its own terms, interviews are an effective tool. One particular approach to interviewing is women's oral history, an interdisciplinary method that relies on procuring subjugated texts from disenfranchised people in order to develop first-person accounts that contain a sense of individual experience, that documents what would be otherwise undocumented, and makes visible that which would be otherwise invisible (Reinharz, 1992). Women's oral history places women, especially marginalized women, in a position to speak of and for themselves and allows their sense-making and their experience an opportunity to be discussed, recorded, and preserved as part of the public record. This in itself is described as emancipatory (Anderson and Jack, 1991), but the possibility of an additional liberation exists in that the talk of a subject has the potential to reveal a "discursive process of consciousness that explicates that (sic) interconnections among personal, social, and cultural realities (Nelson, 1989, p. 224)". By carefully attending to and interpreting the narratives that women tell about their lives, researchers
gain insight into how women organize, understand, and experience the world around them, which in turn reveals how consciousness is not simply the act of interpreting, but also of constructing the social world (Geiger, 1986). This means that a woman's story can be distilled to uncover its underlying essence, a structural/relational framework that she uses to organize and unify the story she tells, the descriptions of her experience.

In seeking out and presenting muffled voices and muted stories, women's oral history avoids the tendency to generalize that has been cited as problematic to feminist research (e.g. hooks, 1984) and focuses on individual lives in order to deal with what Sexton (in Reinharz, 1992) terms the "flesh and blood reality" that puts patriarchal injustice on display. This again emphasizes the interdependence between the personal and the political, especially as individuals' narratives are used to explore the "problematic dimensions" of language and discourse (Anderson and Jack, 1991). This opportunity exists because it is recognized that narrated events are not replications of lived events; rather, they are accounts (Borland, 1991) or dramatizations (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991) made to a specific audience (the interviewer as well as the sponsoring institution) and therefore subject to the social and cultural constraints of the interview context and the particular researcher-researched relationship. As such, oral history interviews allow researchers to "understand and analyze that which women have held as significant and how they have perceived and interpreted this through (as well as to) the ideological blueprints they've institutionalized (Ibid., p. 90, parenthesis mine)." Thus, the consciousness
that emerges in oral history interviews is understood as a bridge, a span that links for women what they think with what they do and how they act, as well as the meaning of this arrangement (Anderson et al., 1987).

Deconstruction

For reasons already cited, combining a phenomenological, interpretive framework with the more critical focus of deconstruction offers a useful and effective approach to discourse analysis. Although the term "deconstruction" has been used generically to refer to a variety of methodological procedures, especially by feminists (Reinharz, 1992), all of these methods begin with the assumption that texts are designed to "teach" their audiences a particular system of meaning, and that this system can be exposed by challenging and disassembling the dominant interpretation of a given text. Further, the idea of textual neutrality is rejected as androcentric, and texts themselves are viewed as political constructions with ideological goals and tactics.

The goal of feminist deconstruction is not to uncover an absolute reading of a text, but to focus on the process of interpretation itself, which reveals how dominant readings constitute and perpetuate social patterns and arrangements. While Mumby (1988) describes deconstruction as a deliberate attempt to dissolve the "veneer" of reality on texts and to expose obscuring contradictions, some feminists have modified this approach so that oppositional readings are accompanied by embracing ones, sustaining both distrust and belief in a tension that permits muted voices to be
amplified. Rogers (1993; also Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1977), in describing her listener's guide methodology, emphasizes that a reading that is both responsive and resisting is attenuated to voices speaking both within and against cultural prescriptions. By combining belief and disbelief, what emerges is a respect for and sensitivity to the subjectivity and personal experience of the speaking subject as well as an awareness of the ideological constraints and contradictions she faces. In her resisting, oppositional reading, a researcher is able to extricate herself from patriarchal constraints and to see them at work in both her own life and the life of her narrator (Brown and Gilligan). In addition, the embracing, responsive reading allows the researcher to position herself within the discourse she is interpreting, which reduces the distance between herself and her narrator, thus offering connections and making audible that which would otherwise be remote (Rogers). Geertz (1981) describes this process in which disbelief and external categorization are suspended as one that renders a storyteller accessible; her normalness is exposed and her opacity reduced. The result of this combination is not a duplication of a narrator's understanding of her experience, but a new understanding of that experience, an understanding informed by both the personal subjectivity of the narrator as well as an awareness of how that subjectivity has been discursively subverted. This leads to the development of a counterdiscourse outside established theoretical frameworks that is necessary to understanding women (Nelson, 1989).
Specific Methodological Issues

Data Gathering

Recognizing that the interview is a linguistic, social, and psychological event demands attention to issues of language as well as cultural, social, and interpersonal norms and conventions, both in developing and conducting an interview and in reading the resulting text. A prime concern for feminist researchers is the asymmetry in the interviewer-interviewee relationship and the potential for appropriation (Anderson and Jack, 1991) and even oppression (Patai, 1991). A second stumbling block is a researcher's "incomplete conversion" from the traditional functionalist paradigm to a feminist interpretive one (Anderson and Jack; Brown and Gilligan, 1992). Both of these topics are addressed in the following section, in which I describe the process by which I gathered the data for this study, which consists of an interview transcript that I developed a year ago as a first year graduate student. The interviews relied on two informants5, whom I identify here using aliases I assigned. Sabrina was both a dancer and a partner in an agency that booked dancers into different clubs, and Norm was her business partner as well as her romantic partner. The following section describes the circumstances and events surrounding the interviews I conducted, the development of the text, and the evolution of the proposed research.

5 Though the terminology is that of old anthropology, it is used here to reflect the fact that my research began with a heavy "functionalist" bias.
As a first year graduate student in a qualitative methods class, I approached my data gathering assignment in my typical style, that is in wanting to please my professor and get a good grade. The significance of this point lies in how this motivation influenced my interaction with my informants, an influence that became obvious to me only in hindsight and a pitfall found problematic by other researchers as well (Anderson and Jack, 1991). I had already invested significant time in developing a preliminary proposal for research into strip joint graffiti (an assignment for a different class) and had anticipated continuing with this project in the methods class, but my proposed research site suddenly became unavailable to me. With little time to develop an alternative topic, I elected to continue pursuing the stripping industry but from a different angle, one that was congruent with the curriculum of my methods class, which required me to spend time "in the field" as well as conduct interviews. Because of the time constraints of a ten-week quarter system, I was required to do so quickly.

I began by reviewing the employment ads in the classified section of the Sunday paper under the category "dancers" and responded to the one that read something like: "Nervous? Insecure? Call Sabrina" because it offered a name first of all and a woman's name in particular. Also, because the ad was obviously targeting beginners, I felt my status as an outsider would be less of an obstacle. Judging by the response I got, my hunch was right. I explained to Sabrina the nature of my call, that I was not interested in becoming a dancer but in learning about them, and she readily invited
me to a dance "contest" that was being held later that same week in a bar that she and Norm "booked". 

As I approached the bar, I was filled with a mixture of excitement, fear, intrigue, and even amusement with my own adventurous spirit. In hindsight, I look back at that moment and recognize an ebullience fueled by ethnocentrism. Not only was I congratulating myself for displaying daring far beyond the realm of the middle-class white homemaker and student in which I traditionally operated, but I was also hiding behind and relying upon the presence of my husband, who insisted on accompanying me because of his concerns for my safety. While I had initially refused his company because I didn't want to represent myself as less than autonomous, I later changed my mind knowing that I would feel less vulnerable in his presence. (Personal autonomy for personal safety — a reasonable exchange in the economy of patriarchy.) In hindsight, I see both my self-congratulatory giddiness and my private security force as evidence of the social privilege and moral superiority that I would eventually hear my informants denounce, and I share Patai's (1991) concern about the possibility of exploitation (or the impossibility of avoiding it) when researching underprivileged groups.

Nevertheless, it was with this air that I first met Sabrina as well as a number of other dancers to whom she introduced me. Their openness surprised me, and as I spoke with one dancer in particular, I could not help but feel some discomfort in our conversation. I could feel her wanting to appear "normal" to me — and even more, "important" — as she told me
of her long history as a dancer and of how much she had seen. Upon finding out I was a student in Speech Communication, she told me of the sociology course she had taken in college. When I gave her a deliberately vague answer about the nature of my inquiry, an answer that had felt completely comfortable in rehearsal, I suddenly felt shallow and deceitful. But I didn't dwell on this unpleasantness because my actions were within the letter of the law that was being established in my course instruction. Issues of class and race, of exploitation and co-optation, of appropriation, power, and privilege had not been addressed, and it is only in hindsight that I am able to articulate and make sense of the qualms I felt at the time.6 Rather, the course was being directed toward gaining entry and acceptance in the field, securing informants, navigating the culture, and demonstrating traditional standards of reliability and validity. Eager to please student that I was, it was natural that this is where I concentrate my efforts.

After two additional periods of observation (as required by the course), I arranged my first interview with Sabrina. I had constructed my interview guide in consultation with my professor and my course texts (e.g. Patton, 1991; McCracken, 1988; Lofland and Lofland, 1994), paying particular attention to asking open-ended questions that would not constrict my informant's answers. My intention was to understand the stripping industry from a "native's" point of view; I wanted to know what

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6 Brown and Gilligan (1992) offer another example of researchers, and research design, being transformed during the inquiry process.
my informant did as a dancer and how she felt about it. My questions asked about her job, her interactions and relationships there, and the way in which she represented this job to "the public." During the first interview session, I can recall feeling more concerned with my performance as an interviewer (Was I doing a good job? Would my professor think so?) than with attending to my informant's words, feelings, and meanings, a preoccupation that is evident in the interview transcript.\(^7\) In addition, I felt both distracted and challenged by the presence of Norm, who repeatedly interrupted my conversation with Sabrina to offer his own contributions. In an effort to subdue this tendency, I assured Norm I would schedule an interview with him at a later date, which I did. I was quite comfortable with this solution as Norm's extensive background in the stripping industry certainly qualified him as a high-caliber informant, and given the broad parameters of my research interest at the time, I was as happy to have a male point of view as a female's.

Over the following weeks, I interviewed Norm as promised and then Sabrina again because I was developing a sense of how important it was to persist in pursuing her subjective experience in the stripping industry. In addition, I was growing increasingly comfortable with the fact that both respondents were present for each interview session and began to appreciate the richness of their exchanges. I realized that having a secondary informant making occasional contributions was contributing

\(^7\) Again, see Anderson and Jack, 1991.
data that would otherwise be unavailable to me, just as a focus group yields a different form of data than one-on-one interviews (Morgan, 1989). It was during the course of these interviews that I became aware of how the remoteness that characterized my initial entry into the field was being replaced by a sense of community, or perhaps connection. I began to see and hear and feel what Sabrina and I had in common rather than how we were different. I came to see her not as the dancer I was interviewing, but as the person I was interviewing. It was in this process that the seeds for this current analysis were sown. It was in this process that I came to see that Sabrina's story matters far beyond its description of the stripping industry.

As I reviewed transcripts in the months that followed, these seeds began to germinate. I became aware that many of Sabrina's words sounded exactly like Norm's words, and that many of her explanations mirrored his. I began to sense how he had influenced the story she told and how this story often seemed at odds with a deeper meaning that she found difficult to express. For example, when Sabrina was complaining about guys who "overcoat you as a whore" by offering a dancer money to go home with them, she mentions that she had received one offer in the hundreds of dollars. Norm then interjects, "At least he wasn't insulting about it." But Sabrina's point was exactly the opposite; it was the offer, not the amount, that she found offensive, yet she permitted his interpretation with barely a protest. I realized that Norm's comments were placing limitations upon Sabrina's story and I began to read the transcript less as
her own story and more as the story that was available to her to tell, a story framed within the constraints and conventions of the strip joint, which Norm was so cleanly articulating. It seemed both valuable and necessary to include his testimony in trying to make sense of Sabrina's (Reinharz, 1992).

And finally, as these small seedlings took root, I began to read the entire transcript more critically. My own voice now sounded different to me as I became less preoccupied with the expectations and requirements of my course and more attuned to the significance of Sabrina's words. Whereas before I had reviewed and evaluated my questions and comments with an eye toward assessing my interviewing skills, I began at this point to attend more closely to the kinds rather than the quality of the questions I was asking. I was able to reconstruct the social and moral distance that characterized my initial relationship to my informants and see how this was reflected in what I had made problematic, in what I had asked about. I heard in my questions the voice of our dominant culture and I realized how this too constrained the story Sabrina was telling in that what she said was somehow triggered by what I had asked. She was a cooperative storyteller and answer-giver, which meant that Sabrina's dramatization was as much my own making as it was hers. I began to see my task as understanding both Sabrina's story as well as the way it has developed under cultural, social, and personal constraints. More specifically, I decided to focus on how these constraints are convened, imposed, and revealed in the words of my informants.
Having described the origins of my data gathering, I think it important to also explain its termination. Upon concluding my third interview with Sabrina, it was time in my course to turn from generating data to analyzing it, to begin recognizing and classifying concepts, developing categories, and formulating theoretical impressions. While I felt I still had much I wanted to learn from Sabrina, this sense was overtaken by the rigors of analysis as mandated by the course; it was simply time to move on. In the passing months, my sense of respect for the story that dwelled within my interview transcript grew, and I struggled to identify an analytic framework that would allow me to continue with the project. The challenge I faced was in developing a methodology that would not require me to return to the strip joints for additional observation. This was important to me because of unresolved (and, if the truth be told, even unacknowledged) ethical quandaries. For instance, the concern for my personal safety continued to exist, but whereas before this had been based on bias and preconceptions, it now felt more justified in light of the warning Sabrina had given me at the end of our final session to "just be careful" in future observations. While I received this comment at face value at the time, it later struck me as both personally poignant and methodologically complex. On the one hand, I was moved as I realized the sense of concern and protectiveness this woman bore me, a woman twenty years my junior, a woman who was originally of interest to me by virtue of her "deviance", a woman who daily experiences vulnerability, yet who did not wish it upon me. On the other hand, from a more methodological
perspective, I began to see in this comment the dynamic nature of the interviewer-interviewee relationship. In many senses, I had represented privilege, knowledge, and power in my partnership with Sabrina by virtue of my age, race, educational level, social role and class, yet in other senses such as subject knowledge, expertise, and my dependence on her cooperation, she did so. That she would become my advocate revealed that trust and mutuality had developed, overcoming (or at least mitigating) the obvious asymmetry of our relationship and "validating" the research (Nelson, 1989; Langellier and Hall, 1989).

With this concern for my safety made real, the prospect of additional observation was untenable because I could no longer retreat to the safety of my husband's company for protection. My own feminist consciousness had developed to the point where the inherent unfairness of this arrangement was unacceptable to me, so rather than risking the personal injury against which Sabrina had warned me, I elected not to return at all. I grant that this course of non-action may well be a non-solution to the dilemma I am describing, but I am not convinced that I should have done other than I have.

To own up to and frame this research with the genuineness that it deserves, I must confess another unresolved ethical issue that deterred me from additional strip joint observation. Before arriving at the bar for the first time, I had not expected to experience my own sexual arousal within the strip joint, and when I did so, I was horrified. All my feminist notions (as unsophisticated as they were) about exploitation, co-optation,
hegemony, and so on seemed false and hollow as I felt myself responding
to the eroticism of the environment. Though I have reflected often on this
situation, pondering the source of desire in general and mine in particular
and the relationship between arousal and objectification, I have not
reached a point at which I can reconcile the experience of pleasure in a
climate that violates women. While I assume that other researchers have
experienced similar dilemmas, probably far fewer have reported on them;
certainly none of the studies in my review of the literature made mention
of this fact. It seems reasonable to speculate that this kind of omission adds
to the repressive discourse of sexuality, a discourse that isolates, shames,
and commodifies sexual experience, thereby creating the climate to breed
strip joints in the first place. Making my own experience public, then, is
done not just to illuminate the ethical quandaries that have prevented me
from pursuing further strip joint observation, but also to confront the void
that surrounds sexuality and brackets it from a fuller integration into
human experience.

Data Analysis

The issue of analysis is a complex one for feminist oral history
scholars. For instance, as Anderson and Jack (1991) point out, it is too
simplistic to assume that advocacy resides in the mere documentation of a
woman's experience. Instead, her story must be recognized not as a
reproduction of reality, but as a corruption, a fiction (Visweswaran, 1994),
of the original experience in that it is represented to someone — a
particular researcher representing a particular institution — and therefore requiring some form of analysis. Because interviewers constitute the original audience for the story, thus affecting its content, and because they are in a position that allows them to critique society, some extension of the story as told is both appropriate and necessary (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991). Especially for women's stories, this process is important because their stories are characterized by a duality that reflects both cultural (male) concepts and frameworks, as well as an expression of a lived, muted reality. Listening to both the dominant and muted channels through the process of interpretation/analysis allows researchers to ascertain the relationship between the two and to more fully understand women's perspectives (Anderson and Jack). At the same time, though, researchers bear a special responsibility to their living sources when making "meanings" of their words that they themselves didn't (Borland, 1991; Anderson and Jack). This concern is especially strong when the research subjects belong to a population whose resources are so few that words, stories, and voices are especially precious, especially meaningful, and their preservation especially important (Patai, 1991). Thus, the process of interpretation/analysis should strive to respect both the storyteller and the researcher's interpretive responsibility.

Intuitively I had already begun to recognize the importance of this delicate balance after the data gathering phase of my research had been so abruptly halted by course-imposed time constraints and self-imposed ethical ones. I was left with my interview transcript and the sense that
there was something in it that mattered, as well as a feeling of obligation to persevere in bringing Sabrina's story "further along." In deliberating over just how to go about this, as well as other methodological concerns, I was reminded of a game I had played with my children when they were young.

A fiddlestick story, as most second graders can tell you, is a collaborative fiction in which one participant grasps a stick or a branch, something deemed "the fiddlestick", and begins to tell a story by initiating a plot and introducing characters. Upon building an appropriate level of dramatic tension, she or he stops and places both the fiddlestick and the outcome of the story into the hands of the next participant, who extends the narrative in the same fashion before yielding to yet the next participant. Turn taking continues until the players are satisfied with the story they have crafted, a story full of unexpected developments and surprising convolutions. The game is enchanting for two reasons: first, because the innovation and creative subjectivity of each storyteller weave a story of non-summative proportions, and secondly, because the good intentions of each storyteller allow that individual contributions be regarded as communal. Distorting the meaning of any one player's vision is not an issue because each vision is but a way to bring a greater tale to fruition.

In this same sense, I do not see my analysis as a re-writing or a distortion of Sabrina's story, but as an extension. I am currently holding the fiddlestick, but I do so with respect and regard for the story she has initiated. I do not represent that I am telling the story that she had in mind
when she held the fiddlestick, but only that our final product will reflect our sequential contributions and our good intentions. Of importance here is the emphasis I am placing on my interpretation as just that, as my understanding of Sabrina's story, an understanding that has developed through my knowledge, experience, and concerns as a researcher; while verification of my analysis by Sabrina might be interesting, it is not necessary, nor even necessarily desirable (Chanfrault-Duchet, 1991). At the same time, however, I recognize that this transformation of Sabrina's words is the "kind of savage social therapy" described by Chanfrault-Duchet, a course of action that is only defendable and never absolutely justified, or what Geertz (1981) describes as "essentially contestable."

Important in defending and validating my interpretive prerogative, and in reducing its contestability, is the degree to which the process is made accessible to readers for their scrutiny, review, and understanding. The following section provides this illumination.

Making Interpretive Choices. For phenomenologists, the primary emphasis of the interpretive process is on the concreteness of a phenomenon for the speaking subject. In this regard, a speaker's words are accepted as raw data that contain the description of, or point the way to, "the things themselves." Because phenomenology recognizes that reality is constructed through "being," it uses women's stories to "move toward" a phenomenon, to explore the relationship between concrete, lived reality and the subjective understanding of that reality, to see how structures of

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8 Nor is it possible since I can no longer tracer her whereabouts.
experience are used to give meaning and form to consciousness. A process of systematic reflection is used to elicit, illuminate, and explicate phenomena that are experienced as concrete events, and, in the very process, made obscure, to "reanimate meaning (that) is sedimented in daily life" (Langellier and Hall, 1989; Nelson, 1989).

The thick description and personal accounts that phenomenology relies upon constitute a form of knowledge that lends itself to a sharing that is tenuous at best (Geertz, 1981). The question of how best to do this is further influenced by the methodology of women's oral history where, in addition to the phenomenological focus on the words of the speaking subject, preserving and presenting a woman's own voice is an important consideration (Reinharz, 1992). I have attempted to resolve this dilemma by adopting Seidman's (1991) method of crafting a profile, a "compelling way" of sharing interview data that allows readers "to come to know the experience of (storytellers) through their (own) stories." This approach relies upon the careful construction of a narrative consisting of a participant's own words, thereby making the process of interpretation one of selection, where the researcher's voice is silent, but where her judgment is active in piecing together those interview passages that "reflect the person's consciousness (p. 91)." A profile, then, just like a fiddlestick story, is a collective production, a story that belongs to both interviewer and storyteller, and at the same time offers "a way to find and display

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9 Although Seidman uses the term "consciousness" with less precision than phenomenologists typically do, I believe his argument withstands the lexical shift.
coherence in the constitutive events of a participant’s experience, to share
the coherence the participant has expressed, and to link the individual’s
experience to the social and organizational context within which he or she
operates (p. 92)." Thus, rather than describing Sabrina’s consciousness
with my own words, ideas, and concepts, I will rely upon her capacity to
know and speak of herself to demonstrate how she organizes and
integrates the events of her being-in-the-world.

In reading the interview transcripts and in selecting those passages
that have the "compelling" potential to reflect Sabrina’s consciousness, I
will especially look for expressions of her subjective experience, the "web
of feelings, attitudes, and values that give meaning to (the) activities and
events" of her life (Anderson and Jack, 1991, p. 12). Questions that can be
used to frame this exploration are provided by Anderson and Jack: What
are the storyteller’s feelings about the event she is describing? How does
she understand what happened to her: What meaning does she make;
does she think about it in more than one way; how does she evaluate what
she is describing? If not mine, whose question and which question is being
answered? And finally, what is being left out; what are the absences?

In answering these questions, I will be informed by a voice-centered,
relational approach (Rogers, 1993; Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1989)
in which women are viewed as authorities of their own experience and
women’s voices are heard as authentic expressions. Implicit in this
method is the importance of immersing oneself in the interview in order
to burrow beneath outward conventions of dialogue and self-presentation
in order to be able to listen for important revelatory expressions. These include a woman's moral language, which reveals the relationship between her own self-concept and cultural norms, between her values and others', as well as how she values and devalues herself; meta-statements, which reveal the categories of a woman's structural framework and how she socializes feelings under pressure of norms; and the story's internal logic, or the consistencies and contradictions it contains as well as major statements about experience that can shed further light on her sense-making schema. Multiple readings are necessary to form an understanding of the narrative that integrates its content with the voice of the speaking subject.

While initial readings reveal a sense of what is happening and are attentive to emotional resonances, to reoccurring words, images, and metaphors, and to contradictions and inconsistencies in style, including revisions and absences in the story and pronominal shifts, subsequent readings concentrate on listening for the "self" or the "I" of the narrator in order to develop a sense of how she speaks of herself before the researcher speaks of her. It is here that phenomenology's concept of embodied voice and women's oral history's dedication to preserving a woman's voice converge. By attending to and maintaining voice, a researcher asks not only who is speaking, but also who is listening. In this light, it becomes possible to focus on the connection between gender, experience, and expression, and to retrieve this relationship as a context for inquiry in which "truths can emerge or become clear (Brown and Gilligan, 1992)."
Thus, by combining the different readings, a researcher is able to bring herself into relationship with the speaker, into a position of mutuality and congruence that allows her to assess the data with a sense of honesty and with attention to the concreteness of the experience as described. In addition, by entering into relationship with the speaker, the researcher establishes an interpretive context that is both responsive and resisting. It is responsive in the sense that the researcher and speaker are in a position of mutual congruence and resisting in the sense that this position is counter to traditional/androcentric research principles. Having established relationship, the researcher is able to listen both for and against the conventions of everyday life that are grounded socially and culturally in the experiences of men. She is also able to attend to the speaker's story as an authentic reflection of cultural prescriptions.

Using this method, I will attempt to identify significant passages of Sabrina's testimony and assemble them to form a narrative using the sequential process described by Seidman (1991), which includes the marking, labeling, combining, editing, and ordering of key passages. Also important in this process is the consideration given to choosing an appropriate pseudonym. My personal inclination in this regard is to identify Sabrina by her stage name, the name that she has chosen for herself and under which she performs because I see this name as self-selected and therefore personally meaningful, a label that she herself uses in establishing her identity as a dancer. However, the university committee that oversees and approves research has required me to assign
her an additional alias, yet another layer of insulation, because of its concern for the preservation and protection of her identity. While I understand the committee's concern, I have wrestled with two issues: the difficulty in finding a label that fits both Sabrina's humanity and her role as a dancer, and the additional distortion that undermines the authenticity of this report. I take some comfort from the fact that I am not the first researcher to struggle with the issue of aliases (e.g., Visweswaran, 1994), but my misgivings on the subject remain. It is in this light that I have arrived at the pseudonym by which you read of Sabrina. Norm's alias was easier, and while I cannot claim conscious brilliance for choosing a name that reflects the norm-ative pressure his position suggests, I am most satisfied with this coincidence. In addition, I have furthered disguised Sabrina's identity by changing or deleting the names of all people, cities, and business establishments contained in her account.

In addition to the phenomenologically-constructed profile that makes accessible Sabrina's understanding of her experience as a dancer, I hope to provide a critique of the discursive mechanisms that impinge upon and inhibit both this understanding and this experience. Again, as Nelson (1989) argues, this dual-pronged approach is effective in that phenomenology is able to expose that which is violated by discourse and deconstruction helps to identify the discursive agents. The following section provides more detail.

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10 While outside the scope of this paper, the need for this type of covert action points to the vulnerability that dancers endure as a routine facet of life.
Deconstruction. As explained earlier, the objective of this part of my analysis is to explore the interview text for its ideological components, to disassemble the dominant interpretation in order to see how it "teaches" a particular system of meaning. The result is not intended to be a duplication of Sabrina's understanding of her experience, but a new understanding of that experience, an understanding informed by her own meaning, which will emerge in the profile, complemented by insight that develops in the unraveling of discursive strands. Given the array of methods used to deconstruct discourse and the generic nature of feminist deconstruction (Reinharz, 1992), it is necessary to specify the procedures to be used in this process.

Discourse interacts with subjectivity by obscuring the contradictions that naturalize certain relationships and represent vested interests as general ones (Mumby, 1989; Phillips and Brown, 1990). Exposing the synthetic nature of these contradictions, relationships, and interests, that is in revealing them as ideological constructions, is the goal of deconstruction. By adapting Potter and Litton's (1985) analytic tool of linguistic repertoires, Wetherell (1986) offers a way to poke through these ideological constructions and to reveal their inner workings and hegemonic operation. According to Wetherell, linguistic repertoires exist as the available accounts and explanations used by individuals to collectively construct the broad-based set of organizing principles, meta-patterns, or regularities of a particular ideology. In other words, linguistic repertoires are the tools and raw materials of ideological constructions. For
individuals, linguistic repertoires serve as personal accounting systems; they appear in speech and in texts as reoccurring and compatible themes and metaphors and grammatical and stylistic conventions, including tropes and figures of speech. When seen as narrative structures, these linguistic repertoires have the potential to reveal how an individual's relation between self and the surrounding social sphere is discursively developed and maintained. Chanfrault-Duchet (1991) explains that surface refrains, which represent key phrases, and more formal reoccurrences, representing key patterns of a narrative, contain indications of a subject's definition of self and how this definition fits into broader social models. Myths that can be identified through stereotyped images, gestures, attitudes, etc. reveal a collective memory that corresponds to a shared social knowledge. To the extent that these refrains, phrases, and myths embody linguistic repertoires, the relationship between discourse and subjectivity can be assessed. By recognizing and attending to the linguistic repertoires of Sabrina's and Norm's testimony, it is possible to expose evidence of discursive operation.

An important feature of linguistic repertoires that makes them particularly useful for my research design is that they are contextually dependent, i.e., different communication contexts will yield different repertoires. According to Potter and Litton (1985, p. 89), linguistic repertoires are "regular features of linguistic usage (that) can be shown to relate to the interpretive exigencies of the situation in hand." This means that the interviewer-interviewee relationship in which the present data
was gathered can receive the privilege appropriate for feminist research. With this emphasis, it becomes possible to allow for the fact that Sabrina would not tell the same story of the stripping industry to a potential dancer she was trying to recruit or to her parents in the event they discovered her profession. By understanding my role of interviewer, of institutional representative, of cultural norm, I can read the linguistic repertoires of Sabrina's story as those that occur under the precise social standards and normative pressures that existed in our relationship.

Identifying and critiquing the linguistic repertoires used by an individual requires an appropriate understanding of their utility to the speaking subject. Wetherell (1986) explains that from a functional perspective, linguistic repertoires serve individuals in two important ways. First, they re-focus explanations of circumstances and conditions from structural and social origins to individual ones, thereby justifying or at least excusing patterns of injustice. Secondly, linguistic repertoires help to stabilize subjectivity by directing individual responses to this injustice. In this way, discourse directs both action and understanding as individuals are induced into enduring and/or contributing to oppressive conditions. Attention to these subject areas, especially to how Sabrina and Norm describe and make attributions about apparent inequities and the relationship they establish between themselves and the consequences of their actions, will assist in identifying the linguistic repertoires that are present in the text and in understanding the dual capacity in which they function, i.e., on an individual as well as a socio-cultural level.
Also of illuminative potential as a form of linguistic repertoire is that which is not explained or accounted for. As Wetherell (1986) explains, repertoires themselves limit for individuals what can be explained, and those contradictions that exist but cannot be explained become transparent, so they are rarely addressed. Anderson and Jack (1991) refer to this phenomenon in women's stories as "the presence of the absence" and describe the problematic issue as a woman's failure to interpret her experience and to fully develop a perspective of her own life and its events. By looking closely at the language a woman uses, at the linguistic repertoires that are used to present a particular story or erase the significance of another, it is possible to see how cultural confines have shaped her understanding of her experience. Of particular interest in this regard will be contradictions that exist between Sabrina's testimony and Norm's, in what she is able to see and understand and account for compared to him. This point is especially important as it speaks to the impact that Norm has in the telling of Sabrina's story and to my choice to position him as the background narrator and allow Sabrina's words to occupy a central position. This was more an intuitive choice than an intellectual one that was intended to provide Sabrina's voice with the amplification it deserves.

**My Role/Experience**

Though not intentional, it is common for feminist researchers to recognize and discover personal changes occurring throughout the course
of a research project. Certainly the chronology I provided of my data-gathering phase and the discussion of the evolutionary nature of this proposed research indicate that this has indeed been my experience. Exploring these issues over time has especially allowed for the type of after-the-fact awareness described by Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Hale (1991) that stimulates ethical and other methodological qualms about the initial research design and an awareness of how subtly yet persistently the positivist paradigm asserts itself. Yet the many (too many?!?) months that this project has spanned have been characterized by more than just growth as a researcher. They have also marked a period of tremendous personal growth, tumultuous relationship, and significant change financially, geographically, and professionally. Acknowledging the reality of these events and reflecting on how they have shaped my intellectual, emotional, and spiritual being is important to the quality and integrity of the proposed research because I believe, like Rogers (1990), that a researcher's calculated effort to suspend or bracket her "self" from her research project is neither possible nor advisable. Rather, it is only through one's "self" that connections and interpretations are made, and so it becomes methodologically relevant that such dramatic change occurred in between the gathering of my data and its analysis. I do not know how the following report is different from the one I would've developed under more stable, less dynamic circumstances, but I suspect it is both richer and wiser.
Chapter 3: Results

Interpretation

The following profile (Seidman, 1991) is a reconstruction of Sabrina's testimony developed after numerous readings in which I earnestly strived to listen "for" as well as "through" the cultural prescriptions that bind a woman's interpretation of her experience (Rogers, 1993). Methodologically, I deviated from Seidman's formula by organizing the material thematically rather than chronologically, as this approach exposes with far greater clarity the conflicting and competing forces that Sabrina attempts to reconcile in the transcript as well as in her daily life. Further description of the analytic decisions, mood, and mindset that produced this synthesized version of well over 100 pages of interview transcript is contained in the previous methods chapter.

As mentioned earlier, it was my assumption in crafting this profile that Sabrina herself is sufficiently capable of and uniquely qualified to explain, describe, and reveal the meaning of her experience in the world, that my job as a researcher was to identify and draw together those passages of testimony in which her subjectivity is most resonant, and therefore that
additional elaboration on my part would be not only superfluous, but decidedly injurious to the task at hand. While the profile is intended to be read as a coherent, unified expression of Sabrina's experience, unimpeded by external voices, it should be noted that the thematic groupings that organize the material reflect the consciousness that I myself brought to the analytic process and stand as my contribution to explaining Sabrina's meaning. The categories emerged from the data over the course of many readings and directed me to the literature, which in turn sent me back again to the data, to the words of Sabrina herself. A discussion of these concepts appears at the conclusion of the profile.

In the following document, words enclosed in parentheses are my own. They reflect modifications of or additions to the original spoken testimony and are intended to clarify passages that would be otherwise confusing. Ellipses, or the three-period series, indicate sentences that Sabrina, for one reason or another, elected not to continue. The symbol ">>>" identifies where I have broken the transcript to reassemble it as presented below.

We begin at the beginning, with Sabrina's recollection of what it felt like becoming a dancer.

Sabrina's Story

Background

When I first started... I mean, where I come from, I didn't have many boyfriends because they didn't like me very much. I was not
necessarily attractive or anything like that, anything near that. I went to a white high school and I'm Mexican. I look different. I'm okay to spend time with, but as a girlfriend, no, I don't fit in that way. So I come down here, I get up on stage, I do my thing, and the first thing they tell me is how beautiful I am. And it's like, wow, somebody thinks I'm beautiful; somebody thinks I'm, like attractive. And I started moving around clubs and everywhere I went, I could ask for every shift I wanted, anything, because they thought I was beautiful. And I'd make tons of money, at least a hundred bucks a day because people (thought I was) beautiful.

I started over in (my hometown in the Pacific Northwest), and there was an ad in the paper for dancers. This chick named Mary. Called her, set up an appointment, did a dance audition, and it's topless, so then you show your boobs, make sure that they're in reasonable condition, and that was basically it. They hired me on the spot. But what happened is I was staying with a friend because I was homeless at the time and my friend got kicked out of her apartment, so we were stuck. We had to go somewhere. There was nowhere we could go, so we figured we'd go visit some friends in (another city). So we went to her mom's and basically stuffed everything I could in my car. Got gas money from her mom — they weren't on good terms and (she) just gave her $50 not to come back. We went to (one city) to stay with these people for two weeks. It was supposed to be for two weeks, and then we were going to come back to (our hometown). (But) the guy, Terry, he was the one we were staying with, him and his wife and his children. So we ended up staying with them and
Terry. He was divorced. His first wife was a stripper and I’d never... I'd only done topless, so that's no big deal. To a girl, it's not as hard. I was real nervous going and trying it, but Terry told me, "Look, it's okay. No problem. My wife used to do it. The guys aren't allowed to touch you and you aren't allowed to touch the guys. You get to keep your (distance?)."
Which was good with me because, when you do topless, you have to touch guys. Not like touch them in genital areas, but you grab your boobs and get dollars like that (squeezes her breasts together indicating money is secured in her cleavage). Or you can lift up your G-string on the side and they put it in. But that's too close. I had one girl got bit in the nipple the first day I started.

So you're supposed to hold onto your nipples.

That's topless for you.

I didn't like it very much. I did okay; the guys really like me, but, I don't know; it wasn't worth it. So this (stripping) seemed good for me. Anyways, so back to Terry. He told me, "Why don't you try these places?"
And his wife is a very Christian woman. I had to be real quiet, real discreet, because I didn't want to get kicked out because I had nowhere else to stay. She would have been pretty mad about it. She's got kids and stuff, although I would never... When I come home, I leave my work at work.>>> (My friend) came and left... we had a fight. She was doing stuff she wasn't supposed to. She smoked a lot of weed and was hanging out. I'd stay home and basically take care of the kids. That was my way of paying
my food and rent. For a while there, I was just a nanny for a little while, basically. Took care of the kids. I didn't have enough nerve to go do what... Finally there was this ad for this lady called Dianne. She was the only female. I thought, well, you hear things, you know? Like, oh, you're going to have to suck this guy's dick, or you have to sleep with him in order to get a good paying job. I was like, maybe if I go with a girl I won't have to deal with that kind of stuff. Called her up, did my audition, and there I was.>>>

At that point in time, I was averaging on weekdays about $70 a shift. That's only on weekdays; on weekends, it was better. I could usually pull a bill.>>>  

**Money**

When you work seven or eight shifts a week at one place, you burn yourself out. Your money goes down. Quickly. It's hard. (So it helps to) keep your shifts low. Do three shifts a week, maybe. If you're going to do more than that, make sure they're different ones every week. Because if you get... like, this one girl>>> she's been doing the same schedule for two months and right now, she's doing really bad right now.>>> If you set yourself up like that, you're asking for it. You've gotta think with your brain.>>>  

I've worked with blonde goddesses, and the ones, you know, tall legs down to there, their boobs are like that big (gestures to indicate an enormous bust), and I've done better than them for one reason and one
reason only. They fool around, and the guy sees, "I am a blonde goddess, and you have to give me money." Moneywise, I'll do way better than (her) just because I'll say, "Hi, how are you?".>>> My satisfaction is in doing better financially. Makes me feel ten times better. She can be a bitch, but does she make a lot of money?>>>

Usually if I'm putting on a good show, I'm making a decent amount of money, and the guys seem to be enjoying themselves, then I have a lot more fun. Especially if the guy... even if I don't make a lot of money and the guys seem like they're having fun, that almost does it for me. Makes my day. To me that means they like what I'm doing and they think I'm doing a good job. And they might not tip me a whole bunch this time, but maybe next time. Maybe next time, they might bring a friend, maybe.">>>

There's guys that I would feel uncomfortable takin' that much money from because I would feel that I was obligated.>>> Basically, you can tell. If the guy's drunk, I get kinda, well, I don't know if I should or not, 'cause it's kinda like iffy... If the guy's drunk, he might be givin' away money just 'cause, cause he's drunk, and he doesn't know what he's doin'... But on the other hand, I'm like, well, he's a grown guy, and if he's got that much money in his pocket, I'm like, well, why not. That's what I'm here for. That's why I'm in a beer joint 'cause if they get drunk, that's what I get.

But it's kinda hard for me sometimes. And the girls say, "Well, take it! He's puttin' it out there." And I'm like, okay, but sometimes it's kinda hard 'cause you don't wanna make anybody mad.
I met up with this one guy and he gave me 80 bucks one time. He was really drunk and he thought he was gonna get married to me (chuckle). He was like, "I'm gonna marry you!" 'Cause I did this one move that he really liked, and he just wanted me to do it over and over again basically. And I'm like this guy just gave me 20 bucks for one song! I go, "Do you think I should keep it or should I give it back to him?" And she goes "Keep it! That's what you're here for. If you can make that kind of money, then go for it." >>>

The guys that make me angry are guys I know don't have a lot of money and I know that they might have kids at home that could use the money they're spending... I mean, I can't really do anything about it, you know... If it's not me, it's somebody else that they're spending that money on, but I wish that they would think a little bit. There's guys you know have kids and that they should be spending their money on their kids. Because kids need things — new clothing, shoes, whatever... And they're in here... >>>

It just surprised me I've done so well. Really it has, honestly. I didn't think I would do so good. But it's like, ever since I've started (gestures in an upward trajectory.) Especially when I went into his (Norm's) clubs. They were bigger clubs. And I could do just about any shift and as long as there were people there, I could make money.
Relationships

(You want me to tell you about) the pole? Dahn, dahn, dahn! (Mimicking ominous music.)>>> Well, you got somethin' to hold on to. Basically you can walk around it and you can lean against it, lift your legs up... It's just very comforting 'cause like... When you don't have anything there... It's like it gives you a little more to do instead of just doing your normal thing. You can hold on to it... It's a real security blanket. If there's a place that doesn't have a pole, it's real hard for me to dance there 'cause I'm so used to my routines with a pole there that I feel kinda naked without it. If I go to reach out for it and it's not there... (chuckle). It's kinda strange.>>> (When you're doin' a shower set, first) I turn on the water and make sure it's getting warm 'cause sometimes it's really cold>>> and then you go, "Okay, guys, I'm goin' in the shower!" And they go, "Aehhhhhhahe!" get all excited.>>> Sometimes I run out there and I go (shakes her head), get water everywhere.>>> It's more fun for them if you get all wet. And you get all wet, splash 'em all over with water 'cause they love that. They love gettin' all messy and wet.>>> And the guy who tips you the best or the bachelor, you give 'em the shaving cream and you have 'em spray it on you. He's not touchin' you; he's just sprayin' shaving cream all over you. And most of 'em, they go for your boobs or your crotch, basically. Sc-c-c-ch (mimicking spraying of cream) 'cause they think that's so cool and then you go, "Oooooh!" You pretend you're gettin' all weird about it, like it's cold or somethin'. And then they start laughin' 'cause they think that's so
They like that 'cause they're like, "Oooh, it came from her crotch. Ooooh." (Chuckle) They're so weird about that. They're really strange.

And then when I'm all covered with it (shaving cream), that's when I'll start tellin' the bachelor to put money on me. And they're not touching you. That's the cool part.

(I like some of my customers.) Some of them are really cool guys. There's a couple guys who used to work at the --- that were my personal favorite guys. When they came in I was glad to see them. I'd say hi, give them a hug. This one guy named Mike, he was so cool. He'd give me at least $20 a set minimum. He's handed me 50's. He always treated me like a lady. He never asked to sleep with me, go out with me, do anything with me. He just wanted me to work at that place so he could come and see me, (which) helps a lot because you're up there and you're naked and stuff.

(Another guy), I talk to him, and he hands me 20 bucks, just for comin' to say hi to him. And he'd give me 20-40 bucks on a song 'cause he wanted me to stay by him. He didn't want me dancin' for somebody else. He was very nice about it. He was not rude. He just put 20 bucks up and he'd tell me how beautiful he thought I was. He was very, very gentleman; very...

And then there's other guys and it's like, "Oh, God, they're here again!" There's this one guy, I cannot stand him. He just annoys the hell out of me. He goes... he'll sit at your rack (the stage), you'll touch your
boobs, and he'll go, "Oh, baby!" really loud. And that's really embarrassing. And then he'll go (a clucking type sound), like he wants you to come here. And that's really irritating because you're trying to do your best job...

You're trying to look graceful and there's somebody going, "Here, Cutie, Cutie." It sounds like they're calling (their) dog or something. I ain't nobody's dog. He knows what my name is.>>> You're thinking, "God, you're a dork," but you're smiling your little face off because you can't say anything to him because you're always running that risk that he'll just walk off and not tip you. So it's better to keep your mouth shut and if it really bothers you just stay away from them.

You get at least one guy per shift that's just... this one guy... I was practicing doing my splits on the pole... And I can't go all the way down, okay? I'm not that flexible, but I can go down pretty far. And I got down, and the guy's like, "Oh, cool!" All the other guys like that kind of stuff. This guy's like, "So when are you gonna do the splits on the pole?" I go, "Excuse me? That's what I just did." He goes, "That wasn't the splits. You didn't go all the way down." I go, "When you decide that you're gonna go up there and do the splits on the pole and go all the way down, then maybe I'll tip you. Until then, shut up!"

I'm usually pretty cool, but that guy really made me mad because all these girls, they work hard. I work hard. I try to put on the best show possible, and if they don't like it, they can leave. It's their choice. They can get away from the rack. I can't.>>>
(Usually) you can't tell 'em off. You can, but sometimes it's not in your best interest. Cause if you break, if you start yellin' at him, then all the guys go, "She's a bitch. I ain't tippin' her." And he might badmouth you, too. There's girls that... this girl's ex-boyfriend came in one time, and he goes and leaves a quarter on the rack. That's a pretty big insult, okay? She was pretty mad. She started yelling at him and stuff, and everybody... He started calling her names. "You're a fucking cunt. You're a bitch. You ain't worth looking at. You ain't worth a buck." It is a big deal to us. We're the ones who're up there naked. If the guys were up there with their little dinger-donger hanging out, they'd feel the same way if some girl started going, "Ha, ha!" laughing at their dick. They'd feel pretty stupid.

I get nervous when I go to a new club. That's what's hard for me. Every club's got different bartenders. Cause sometimes bartenders don't like you the minute you walk in. You don't even have to do anything. They look atcha, and — I don't like her — like that (snaps her fingers). They can just be rude. They can screw up your music if they have a CD changer. They can yell at you in front of people every time you even make a mistake. If you did something that you didn't know you did wrong. They'll make up a bunch of rules for you. Whole bunch of things... Like you can't put your butt on the rack. Some of 'em are really weird about that. They're like, "Oh, it's unsanitary. Blah, blah, blah, blah." They get mad at me 'cause I do that or... Some of 'em don't like the way you dance...
It's not really anything that they actually do; it's just very subtle; very, very subtle.

You don't know... you don't know the rules... 'cause everywhere... some of 'em (bartenders) will let you do anything. Some of 'em are so strict in their rules that you don't wanna deal with 'em. And what if the guys don't like you? What if you don't make any money? What if, what if, what if... there's' so many things... 

Tammy (a bartender) is a stone bitch. I hate her. I really do. I don't like sayin' I hate somebody, but I really do actively dislike her. She'll treat me like I'm not even there. If I go up there to get somethin' to drink, like a small pitcher of water, she'll ignore me. Lot of bartenders do that. They'll wait till every payin' customer is done, and THEN, they will maybe take care of you. Like her, she'll take forever with me. She would just not... I could stand there... There are times where I've stood there for 20 minutes waitin' for her to acknowledge my presence and say, "Oh, did you need somethin'?"

I'm (thinking), "Fuck you, bitch, yes I do, and I want it now." (Chuckles).

And then I say, "Yeah, I need a small pitcher of ice please. And then she'll go and take care of something else and go blah, blah, blah, blah, and go empty ashtrays and then she'll come back and then she'll get me my water. It's just ridiculous. I don't have to put up with that. I shouldn't have to."
(When I first started out), I wish I had known about more of the clubs. When I first started out, I thought I couldn't go anywhere else.>>> I didn't know what was goin' on 'cause Dianne (her original agent) controlled us so tightly.>>> Norm gave me his card, but I was too scared (to call him). He's a guy, and I always thought I'm gonna be required to do something I don't wanna get into. 'Cause I had the T&A (an industry publication); I had a car; I could go anywhere, but it was like scary for me. I was in a position of security 'cause I was workin' a lot of shifts, but my money went down and then (Dianne) got another club and I was doin' really well there. And then (Norm) came along. I was like, well, he's a guy, and I didn't even keep his card. I remember that. I threw it away or something like that as soon as I got it because I was like, he's a guy. And I just didn't have the nerve to call him and say schedule me. And then all of a sudden Dianne started tellin' me that she wanted me to go here and there, and I was like, okay.

I didn't know.>>> And I don't know... I was just so scared. I'm real loyal. If somebody does somethin' good for me I tend, as an (employee) to stick with 'em. It's very hard for me to go just dump somebody like that. So I was feelin' incredibly guilty about it 'cause I didn't know if I should call him or not. But I didn't want to call him 'cause he was a guy, and I thought, well, she'll get mad at me if I call. It stayed like that for a while, and my money was going down bad, really bad.>>> And then after a while, he'd (Norm, with Dianne's permission) call me to wake me up and confirm my shifts and
tell me what I'm doin' for the day. And I just... As long as it was fine with Dianne, it was fine with me.>>> 

I just accepted it, 'cause I figured she knew what was best for me. But I was gettin' a lot of morning shifts. I never did that many morning shifts; I usually did better shifts, 4-9 or 9-2's, and then I started workin' only a couple days a week, morning shifts. And I was like, that ain't fair. This girl and that girl, she's gettin to work the Friday shifts. Why ain't I? I work just as hard as any other girl. Harder. All she (Dianne) has to do is call me, and I'll go. I think I thought I deserve better than that. I'd been doin' that for about 6, 7 months, 8 months. Figured I deserved better than to be treated like that. But I didn't know what to do about it.>>> 

(And then Norm started scheduling me) and I started getting better stuff then. I was happy then 'cause I was getting money shifts that were rewarding me for doing the other stuff that I was doing. I was actually making a decent income. And then after a while I realized I could go anywhere. 'Cause after a while when (Norm's) boss started bein' a butthead, I thought, well, hell, I can go anywhere I want to. I don't have to work for this guy and be treated like that. No way. I got all mad. All that righteous anger and all that stuff. So I went to LeGirls, and that was just a disaster, 'cause these guys, (Norm and his boss), even though Greg started treatin' me bad towards the end, they basically treated me really, really good. They treated me like a queen — like I was queen of the fuckin' May! 

I usually don't tell (people) because I've lost some friends (when they found out I was a dancer). My best friend is no longer my best
friend. She lives in my hometown. She was telling everybody. And my brother goes to school with her, and that really made me angry because my brother does not need... He's really cool about it. He's the only one of my family that knows about it, and he's been really supportive and really good about it. But he doesn't need to have somebody going around making fun of him because his sister dances naked for other guys. That's not fair to him. And I love my brother a lot. I'm very protective of him, and I don't think he needs to deal with that kind of thing. He's only gonna be 15. It's okay. He knows I'm only doing it for the money. He knows Norm will take care of me and make sure that I'm safe... and all that good stuff, but... that's it. Other than that I wouldn't be doing it.>

(If you base a lot of your life) on what other people say is okay, you're settin' yourself up when you do this job. I mean if my parents ever found out they'd kill me. They'd be really, really upset and they'd be really disappointed in me. So I justify it to myself sayin' I'm not a prostitute. "Now, Mom, Dad, you tell me what you'd want me to do. To be a prostitute? To be on the streets right now? I'm in a nice, clean house. And where were you? Where were you to help me? You wouldn't help me so why am I supposed to feel bad? And don't start giving me excuses about what I could've done. You don't know; you weren't there."

If I had a child, I would immediately stop dancing. I mean forever. Not because of my body changes or anything like that, but... When my kid asks me what I do for a living, I don't want him... I don't wanna screw up
their heads saying, "Oh, well, I dance." And then they find out I'm a dancer. The kid gets treated different.

And I just don't want my kid puttin' up with that. Especially if it's somethin' so small as me just stop doin' something like that. That's so little, such a little thing to do to make that kid's life a little bit easier. And if when she got older and she ever found out... Or I'd probably tell her... I would hope that she wouldn't be angry with me or anything like that. If she did, I'd have to take her out and make her go watch these girls (chuckle)... 

(To her hypothetical daughter:) "Be a little more open-minded. These girls gotta make a living too. You're lucky you have people that love you and care about you and want the best for you..."

**Fairness Standard**

(Dianne) always treated me like I was scum, basically. She never paid attention to me or nothin'. Even though I realized later I was her most valuable person because the other girls, they'd do shifts, but they wouldn't do shifts like I would do shifts. I'd do anything 'cause I wanted money so bad. (If she called me), I'd be there in twenty minutes. Just as long as it took me to get there. If I wasn't showered, I'd ask her if I could take a shower before I'd go and be a little bit late. She'd be, "Well, take a shower, but be quick about it." I'd take a shower, go... my hair still wet... I was pretty eager. I was pretty eager to please. I didn't want nobody to get mad at me. But it was like all that work wasn't payin' off. It did
moneywise, but usually if you do that kind of stuff, if you're a player, you tend to be treated a little more valuable. But I was not treated like I was valuable. There (with Norm and Greg) I was treated like I was valuable...>>> 

Most girls are late. Almost all the girls... There's only a couple girls... You can ask Norm on that one. He's done it for seven years. He only knows three or four girls out of all the girls — seven years — that are always on time and show up. There's me, this other girl, Mitzi. He knows the rest of them. As a rule, dancers do not show up on time.>>> When I was working at Starlight club, there was this one girl that the guy who was running the show,>>> he thought this girl was so great. Well, guess what? She shows up at least a minimum of half an hour late. Usually about an hour-and-a-half late. So some girls they do three songs on, three songs off. But for me, I don't know. I try to do my best, and I dance the whole time. You get tired. One time I had to do a whole show. No breaks.>>> It's not very much fun, because your money... you either make a lot of money or you don't make any. The guys want to see variety, and if you're the only girl there, there's only so many things you can do.>>> 

They pay you 20 bucks to do a shower set, and if they want your hair wet, they have to pay you extra. But I don't do that kind of thing 'cause that is just pointless. They give me 20 bucks to do it, and then I get tips also. That's more than adequate for me.>>> 

I tell (the new girls) what our rules are, which are no touching. No touching the guy, the guy can't touch you, you don't touch yourself down
there (motions to vaginal area). And that's basically it. I tell 'em, "Look, you're here to dance. These guys are here to see you. If you're dancin' up there and they do not tip you, you do not have to take your clothes off, okay?" A lot of 'em are relieved about that 'cause nobody wants to take their clothes off for free. Nobody does.

(When you're taxi-dancin'), you pick up (your money) and usually what you do is bend it over your hand so it's not as noticeable. Cause if you have too much money in your hand, it looks kinda... The guys are like, "Oh well, she's got plenty of money. Why should I tip her?" You take turns. The first (song) you're dancin' like this (clothed), and then you take your top off, and you're walkin' around with your top off, okay? And if the guys... Basically they can have a free show if they want. So if the guy's not payin' attention, usually you'll go talk to somebody until your song is over. Wait till the next one when you take your bottoms off.

Sometimes I'll wear a skirt 'cause it's easier 'cause then you don't... You don't feel so conspicuous walkin' around without your... Even though it doesn't really matter to me. But I don't like guys seen' a free show anyway. I wear a skirt, and then I can lift it up and let them see whatever they want to see, do my thing... and, it's different.

It's a lot different.

I went to LeGirls (another agency) and they're real nice to me and the guy says you have to audition. I said, "Why? I've been dancing for this long. You know who I am. I shouldn't have to audition. Obviously I'm not grotesquely fat. I'm not disgusting looking." But he says, "We require
everybody to do it." So I say, "Fine. No problem." I say, "Aren't you gonna watch?" He says, "No."

I go, "Well, I'm not doin' no audition unless somebody's gonna watch me, okay, because I can go downstairs and I can be disgusting. I could have warts down there or something. I could have a big rash." So he goes, "Okay, I'll come and watch." He comes down the last song and then goes back up, says, "Oh god, bore, bore, bore. Yawn, yawn." He's like, if you want to do this, here's our schedule."

I didn't like the way he treated me. I'm used to being treated like a lady, being treated like I'm a valuable member of an agency.>>> I wish I would've gotten to the bigger places, made the big money, and, you know, been making the big money for a while, instead of just doin' it for a little while. In a way, I'm a little more tolerant of other people's lifestyles.>>> I'm a lot more open minded. I think the only thing that has changed me for the worse is that now I don't wanna do minimum wage jobs. I think that's the only bad thing. But I'm also bein' good about it. I never was on welfare. I mean, I was taking care of myself. The state was not taking care of me. So I think that was a good thing. I think that helped out. Maybe not whoever, the yuppie in the suburbs, they who think I'm this whore from hell...>>> They think that I'm a prostitute. I'm not a prostitute. I've never been a prostitute. I never will be a prostitute if I can possibly help it. Now that I know what dancing is about, I will probably never be a prostitute. Ever. I just resent the fact that lot of these people don't know. They don't care.
I mean, they say they care, but they don't. They're all worried about their so-called... The wives are all worried about their husbands running off with these young vixens and spending all their money... I... My guy doesn't do that. I try to look my best most of the time and try to be... I try real hard to please him and make him happy and look beautiful. Try to look as beautiful as I can and be sexy and all that good stuff and try not to let me go to the dumps basically. A lot of these women don't care. They're all like, "Well, he should accept me for the way I am." Well it ain't that way. You wanna keep him home with you, then you gotta give a little bit too. They don't think about that.

They think, oh, these girls (dancers) are being a lot nicer than she is (the wife), why shouldn't they get his money? If I was stupid enough to treat him (Norm) so bad to make him go and look at other girls, then I probably deserve it.

Segmenting

(Dancers) are bitches. Plain and simple. Plain and simple. I wouldn't... You know, some of 'em, I thought they were nice, and then when you get to know 'em, they're not very nice at all. They always try... they always want something. That's the problem. I wanna... You know how friendships... Friendship is supposed to be an equal thing. You give and take and you spend time with each other in order to have fun. Right? Good times and bad times... Most dancers, if you have a problem, they don't wanna hear it. If something bad happens, unless they don't like you,
then they wanna hear it, but other than that, they don't care. And if something good happens to you, then they get jealous. It's like you can't really say anything. I usually keep to myself 'cause I just got tired of that. I tried bein' friends with a girl and I ended up the shit kicked out of me.

And I couldn't work for week 'cause I had a black eye. And I had a split lip. And I got my head cracked into my car.>>>)

(The typical dancer) is irresponsible. Usually has had a kid, all stretch marky and whatever. Pain in the ass, most of 'em. Really, I can't even tell you how irresponsible some of 'em are. And the younger, prettier ones don't wanna work, or they cancel last minute, or they say they want this and later say they want that. Or they bitch and whine all the time. They call me up and expect me to listen to their problems all the time. It's like jeesh. (Gesture indicates she doesn't want to hear it).

And then when they do get to work and they bitch and whine 'cause they're not makin' any money and they won't dance at all. They make everybody angry at them 'cause they do stupid things.>>> Geez! There's so many things. There's so many of them. Or some of 'em, they just love fucking you over. It's like they wait for their chance.

When I first get 'em, and as I get to know 'em better, I know kinda... You know (them) mindwise, how they... Try to make them be a little more loyal 'cause it's really hard. Loyalty is like almost non-existent. They'll be ready to fuck you over at any time.>>> We do try to be nice to them and stuff like that. Sometimes they do things that just make us angry and stuff and they get mad at us. Most of the time if we yell at 'em it's cause, it's
Some girls need to be pushed. They do wanna do it, but they're just so scared that they can't do it. That they're afraid somethin's gonna happen to 'em or whatever. And I go, "Look, either you're gonna do it or you're not gonna do it. Go for it. I know you can do it." And trust me, the first time is always the hardest. And after that it's easy." Cause you think that something's gonna happen... and that this thunder and lightening is gonna come and zap you from the sage. It ain't gonna happen.>>>

And then they think about it for a while, and I'm like, "Well, do you want to give it a try?" And they're like, "Well, yeah, okay, let me get dressed. And then they get all worried about what they're wearing, and I'm like, "Don't worry about it, okay, because you can wear whatever you want. If you want to wear shoes, you can wear shoes. If you don't wanna wear shoes, you don't have to wear shoes. Just wear shoes all the way up to the stage. When you're on stage, you can do whatever you want. You're not required... We don't have a dress code. All we ask is that you wear a G-string or a T-bar (thong-type underwear).>>> Because most guys see "butt underwear" all the time, on their wives. They're not very sexy, so it's... It kinda makes the division between their normal life and their dance life. You start wearin' different underwear. It's strange.

(Some girls) pretend they're gettin' off while they're dancing... that's against the law. That makes it hard for the other girl, who's not doin' that. Sometimes her tips go down (because) some guys like that. I used to work with this girl over at Dusty's that could sit on the beer bottle, the wide
neck.>>> And the guy moved his hand because her butt got too close to him, that's how far down she went. I refuse to compete with that. Everybody knows that that girl is a whore. She lives in motels. She doesn't have a house. Guys pay her to do whatever. Everybody knows... And I'm in this for the money, but there's no amount of money that somebody could give me to make me do that because it's just my self-respect. I make perfectly good money doin' what I do and I don't have to sit on beer bottles. I do my thing.

(One) agency upset me because they took away some shifts that I worked... I used to do morning work. Everybody knows mornings suck. I used to do three mornings a week so I could have a certain shift on Friday. Well, when this guy took me off because he has a history of getting his dancers and having them do certain favors for him. Sexual favors. And I was out, 'cause I don't do that. I've always been straight up. I'm not a whore, I'm a dancer.

I can't even say I'm a dancer either, 'cause I just do my job.

Discussion

Over the course of numerous readings, Sabrina's story slowly changed in its significance to me. While I originally understood it as an explanation of the stripping industry and her participation in it, I later came to understand Sabrina's testimony as a form of self-presentation, a dramatization to me, a representative of the dominant culture, designed to
demystify stripping as a profession and destigmatize her personally. I began to see that in the stories she told, the examples she drew upon, and the events and interactions she made significant, she was constructing—or perhaps revealing—herself as a moral being. It was at this point I began reading the text as a window into a woman's moral consciousness, and it was at this point that the categories that organize the preceding material began to present themselves. In the following discussion I elaborate on these categories to show how they correspond to Sabrina's experience. First, however, I provide some theoretical background to frame this discussion. This material is intended to establish the significance to women of what I term "the relational imperative," which I then apply to Sabrina's narrative.

Background

Sabrina's story is powerfully and poignantly laden with statements that reveal her compelling need for acceptance and relational harmony, a condition that is consistent with our cultural definition of womanhood.

11 Although my analysis focuses on gender as the primary mediator of Sabrina's experience, there is ample evidence—and reason—to also examine the influence of race and social class. Sabrina and Norm both make numerous references to the stripping industry as a "blue collar" business and cast more privileged levels of society as judgmental, intolerant, and hypocritical. Norm is particularly harsh in his criticism of legal and social institutions and strident in positioning the strip joint within a particular social class. For instance, he claims, "This industry in this town, which is different than most of the rest of the United States, is a blue collar industry... There is some white collar areas in this city where people can make a living. It ain't got nothin' to do with this one."

In reading Sabrina's profile and subsequent interview passages, the reader will note numerous references that speak to the issue of class and, to a lesser degree, race. Analysis that problematizes these elements, particularly as they intersect with gender, would be undeniably fruitful, but is outside the scope of this project.
Underscoring the prevalence of this definition is the fact that the experience of womanhood has come to be understood, interpreted, and explained through a lens of relationship. Gilligan (1977; see also Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Rogers, 1993; Sommers, 1995), for instance, claims that the feminine construction of reality is relationally oriented. In fact, as Brown and Gilligan argue, to be a woman is to be relationally oriented, and meanings, decisions, and interactions develop within the context of relationship, thereby constructing for women a particular social and moral understanding not shared by men. According to Gilligan, moral development for women is infused with feeling and connection; morality itself is less about justice than about an abstract and unfixed ethic involving compassion and care. She concludes that women experience substantial moral difficulty when they find themselves involved in conflict, and that women's moral actions center around not hurting others, accepting and meeting one's responsibilities and obligations to others, and avoiding conclusions or evaluations that condemn others.

Sommers (1995), in her in-depth analysis of female lawbreakers, extends this line of reasoning by showing how this relational bias complicates and problematizes a woman's interactions with the social world. She looks at how women respond to and accept the expectations placed upon them by significant others as well as society in order to form and maintain relationships, and finds that this centrality of relationships to women is a dominant force in inducing them into breaking the law. Her reasoning is that because relationships are so integrally linked to
women's development and well-being, it is here, in relationship, where they formulate self-esteem and personal efficacy, and it is these qualities that empower them to operate effectively in the social world.

Relationships not characterized by mutual empathy, however, fail to nurture and foster growth, mutuality, and a coherent sense of self and are therefore particularly destructive for women. In situations such as this, women learn to devalue themselves, to become overly-dependent on earning the acceptance and approval of others, and to turn the vulnerability that results from this dependence into a tightly-held focus on survival. In addition, women accept and project upon themselves others' expectations and cultural messages as a way of maintaining the relationships they do have, the very relationships that destroy rather than contribute to their personal success. Sommers identifies some of these expectations as self-sufficiency and material wealth, but, as she notes, numerous social barriers block women from ever achieving these standards, thus intensifying the self-defeating spiral of relationship in which they find themselves.

In their work with adolescent girls, Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Rogers (1993) punctuate the discussion of the centrality of relationship to women by identifying adolescence as the time in which girls make the surrender to the "cultural story of female becoming". They learn to enter into, without disrupting, the world they live in as young women by pursuing and maintaining relationships with others and abandoning a deeper familiarity with and knowledge of themselves. Girls at this age
learn to become women by making hostages of their selves, by binding what they know and feel, in order to enjoy the cultural affirmation and security of relationships. Pipher (1994) labels this process femininity training, but suggests it would be more aptly termed "false self training" where girls veer off to become what the culture wants them to be rather than moving toward an inner understanding of themselves. Moreover, this movement toward an abandonment (Brown and Gilligan) or a dissociation (Rogers) of self, is itself a movement toward morality, toward goodness, as girls respond to a relational imperative that is presented to them as simultaneously the ultimate expression and the ultimate repression of womanhood. What can be seen at adolescence, then, is the transition into a way of being that is marked by a "central paradox": the giving up of relationship, of integrity and congruity with one's self, in exchange for Relationships (Brown and Gilligan).

The picture that develops when these various lenses are combined is a kaleidoscopic one; relationship is established as a rich and vibrant offering to women, only to be shattered by other socio-cultural forces and then reassembled into a disjointed pattern that is nearly impossible to recognize, to articulate, to navigate. That the problems associated with the psychology of women — a desire for authentic connection, a feeling of an inability to convey or believe in one's own experience, a sense of isolation and difficulties in speaking (Brown and Gilligan, 1992) — that these problems develop with predictable and alarming regularity confirms the distortion and disruption imposed upon women, in other words, the
disjointed fragmentary pattern of the relational imperative. It is this pattern I found deeply embedded in, but also effectively disguised by, the story Sabrina told me. It is this pattern I have attempted to set in relief in the preceding profile by organizing Sabrina’s words in such a way that she herself is able to describe and reveal the way she responds to these forces.

Resolving the Unresolvable

Sabrina begins by describing a profound sense of disconnection, a loss of relationship in high school and a more immediate, more compelling state of homelessness, both of which leave her emotionally chafed and needy. In her own words she is "desperate" with "nowhere to go". That this kind of financial collapse and economic hardship would develop as authentic relationships do not is predicted by Sommers (1995), who argues that women in search of relationship find themselves trapped between the expectations placed upon them by society and family members and the very real social barriers that essentially preclude the attainment of these expectations. For example, while an ethic of independence and self-sufficiency appears prominently in the tapestry of our cultural morality, so, too, does the contradictory message of female passivity and dependence. According to Sommers, women anxious to build and maintain relationships are not able to reject either end of this formula. They pursue dependence, which means surrendering self-development in order to exist in relationship; when the relationship falters, women hold themselves accountable for supporting themselves and their children, even though
they now possess only minimal qualifications for employment. Life becomes an ongoing struggle to reconcile the conflicting and self-contradictory body of cultural expectations that establish the path to goodness.

**Money.** Sabrina's testimony reveals how she, as a participant in the stripping industry, experiences and attempts to make sense of this struggle. One theme that Sabrina appeals to in this effort is "money". First, by using money as a measure of her self-worth, Sabrina daily receives concrete evidence of how valuable and how valued she is. But she also recognizes that her value is limited, that it is her responsibility "to think with her brain" so as to avoid allowing her self to become too common, too available, and thus less valuable. At the same time, though, even as she understands and accepts the commodity-like trading power of her self, she remains troubled. While she believes in hard work and in being self-supporting, she is not free from wondering how much money she truly deserves. External conventions of materialism and financial success direct her to get as much as she can, but we hear in Sabrina an inner struggle that challenges this perspective, a struggle that questions whether this is the right thing to do. She wonders about taking advantage of drunk customers and fears angering them. She also feels for young children whose needs are neglected so that hers may be satisfied. Her concern for others and for avoiding conflict leave her at odds with her desire and responsibility to be self-supporting and with the system she relies on for affirmation and self-confirmation.
Relationships. Sabrina speaks directly about numerous relationships and reveals an intense desire for acceptance by and connection with others, and so I've labeled this second theme "relationships". Repeatedly we hear her speaking of trying to do things right, of being fearful when she doesn't know what the right thing is, and of not wanting to hurt or anger others. What is most upsetting to her is the thought of incurring another's disapproval or displeasure and of disrupting relational harmony. Sabrina seems to understand that cultivating relationships in the strip joint is a tenuous and treacherous undertaking, but she nevertheless does so, using the tools and strategies that are available to her. For example, while in other situations money functions to measure self-worth and to meet the cultural standards of self-sufficiency and materialism, here, in relationship, it comes to symbolize care, compassion, and affection — the very qualities of beneficial relationship. We also hear Sabrina trapped between her desire for relational authenticity and the strip joint's hierarchy, which permits and perhaps even encourages her exploitation by others. It is with bitterness but also with resignation that she describes and endures the insults of customers, the indifference of bartenders, and the callous manipulation of agents. For Sabrina, this is an unresolvable dilemma: social expectations of self-sufficiency and independence demand she earn a certain amount of money — an amount she feels she can earn only by stripping — and stripping commits her to a system of relationship in which her self is consistently devalued and degraded. That she has already learned to
depend on money as a substitute for self allows her to contain, but not resolve, her struggle.

Fairness Standard. The third theme in this struggle has been labeled "fairness standard". It is a struggle that is unresolved because Sabrina never completely accedes to the strip joint's demand to surrender her self. On some level, despite having commoditized her self and despite subjugating her self to abusive and inauthentic relationships, she remain present. Although this voice — the true "I" (Rogers, 1993) — sounds troubled, uncertain, and weary from struggle through most of the transcript, there are times when it is both clear and assertive. There are times when Sabrina is unencumbered by questions of right and wrong, unconflicted by strip joint conventions, and when she understands with certainty and trusts with conviction her own inner sense of what the world should expect of her and what it should give to her. Sabrina constructs a basic standard of fairness that guides her own actions and her expectations of others. For instance, she believes in and actively constructs a work ethic, indicating her faith in a system of reciprocity in which attributes such as loyalty, perseverance, and responsibility are rewarded. That the strip joint ignores this system does not dissuade her from her beliefs; rather, the strip joint's disregard for fairness inflames Sabrina's sense of righteousness and allows her to challenge and resist certain practices and people. Although this framework does not help her resolve other questions of right and wrong (such as whether to accept money from guys when she knows they have children at home), it does establish for her some basic parameters of
how she, herself, should be treated. In fact, how she "is treated" by others becomes something of a crusade for her, and she is firm in her conviction that her investment of character and responsibility will — or at least should — pay off. By being good she will be rewarded; by following the rules, she will benefit; by conforming to expectations and agreeing to accommodate others, she will succeed. This is her moral base.

**Segmenting.** For Sabrina, maintaining a sense of herself as a moral being requires work, especially in light of the fact that her framework for morality, her principle of fairness, is persistently violated by strip joint conventions. She manages this task by segmenting her experience into distinct spheres, which allows her to participate in but not completely identify with that which is immoral, and so I have labeled this final theme "segmenting". In essence, she is following a pattern typical of the one stigmatized individuals use to cope with a deviant identity (Goffman, 1963). Sabrina makes rigid and often concrete separations between a "normal" life and a dance life, between touching and not touching the customers, and between herself and the rest of the dancers. In this way, she remains an exception, an aberration, to our traditional cultural understanding of stripper. She remains moral in an immoral occupation. In fact, she isn't even a member of the stripping occupation, a point she underscores in saying, "I can't even say I'm a dancer either 'cause I just do my job."
Embodied Morality

As discussed earlier, the pattern of the relational imperative challenges and often thwarts the efforts of women in general, and certainly as this testimony demonstrates, Sabrina is no exception. In many ways her story is common, her experience typical. However, Sabrina's story does offer a somewhat unusual look at how her inner struggles, those of her moral, "mental" dimensions, are experienced on a physical level; how, by virtue of her profession, that which might be abstract instead becomes concrete, carnal, corporeal. And the corporeal, contested. For in Sabrina's story, her body is the province of men, that which, according to Norm, "they are paying for." They are entitled to see it and respond as they see fit: with compliments, applause, and money, or with sneers, insults, and contempt. At the same time, Sabrina's body is her own, a vehicle she uses to make her way in the world. She understands the allure of her "crotch," her "boobs," and her "butt," an allure that is adolescent in nature but powerful nonetheless — and upon which she capitalizes. She is able to do this only because of the body's insulating capacity, its ability to substitute for self, which would otherwise be degraded, debased, and violated (Foucault, 1985). In this way, a dancer's body becomes for her a tool of utility and manipulation and its functions a form of resistance, as menstruation, pregnancy, and miscarriage, according to Sabrina, are all used by dancers to excuse themselves from strip joint participation. Employing the body in this way is essential to Sabrina's moral deliberations because the self that needs to be made moral in the strip joint
is clearly, viscerally an embodied self. That this is so is evident in Sabrina's testimony, as she speaks of "guys who will try to make you feel bad about yourself" because "you're up there and you're naked and stuff." And elsewhere she explains that being insulted by strip joint customers is a "big deal" to dancers. "We're the ones who are up there naked. If the guys were up there with their little dinger dongsers hanging out, they'd feel the same way if some girl started going, 'Ha, ha, ha,' laughing at their dick." Sabrina's words reveal how the body, her body, has become a site of struggle, a physical field upon which less tangible issues and causes are waged.

But there is more to the concept of body than mere concrete physicality. For what allows the body's significance in the strip joint is the same that centralizes it in the church, and that is the manner in which it is offered. But whereas in the Eucharist of western Christianity, man's body is presented in sacrifice to bring forth spirit through humble acceptance, in the strip joint, woman's body is presented in sacrifice to bring forth salacious stimulation through the suggestion of ownership. It is not Sabrina's body per se that is being fought over in the strip joint, but the right to regulate its display, to control its use, in effect, to determine its owner. Sabrina describes this struggle in explaining how she approaches "taxi-dancing," which requires her to walk around the room with no "bottoms" on.

Sometimes I'll wear a skirt 'cause it's easier 'cause then you don't... You don't feel so conspicuous walkin' around
without your... Even though it doesn't really matter to me. But I don't like guys seen' a free show anyway. I wear a skirt, and than I can lift it up and let them see whatever they want to see, do my thing... And, it's different. It's a lot different.

Though words seem to fail her, Sabrina understands the strategic importance of regulating the display of her body. And on a deeper level, she also understands that this morsel of self-determination is an important aspect of her morality. For although the relational imperative that guides female development and morality induces her into appropriate strip joint participation, a competing force also exists that induces her into some form of resistance, and that is her moral commitment to self, her obligation to fully exist and to remain both present and active within the complete scope of her experience. For Sabrina, body can be mystified but not completely abandoned. She can attempt to offer it as a manifestation of "Sabrina," but her offer is always tentative and conditional because this identity is at odds with other aspects of her self. To embody Sabrina, to become a dancer, is to take on this enduring inner conflict. It is to attempt the impossible: to display body without revealing self, to allow for visual consumption without risking actual consumption. Sabrina can — and does — make body visible, but in a marionette-like fashion. What is invisible are the strings of control, and these she refuses to yield, thus establishing the body as a site of struggle and a field of moral resolution.
Deconstruction

As is seen in the preceding profile, Sabrina's testimony describes and presents numerous struggles that she attempts to resolve in accounting for her profession and her goodness. Her story is intended to be a tool of moral resolution, but what is obvious is that no resolution exists. Though Sabrina adopts and embraces cultural prescriptions of morality such as fairness, responsibility, and self-sufficiency, these precepts fail to bring her the recognition, success, and peace of mind they should. Rather, she is perpetually tormented by questions of right and wrong — for example, by whether she is entitled to more money or less, or by whether she should object to mistreatment or endure it. That the moral code she appeals and conforms to fails to support her and prevents her from integrating her experience with expected conventions points to its discursive nature.

Carol Gilligan's (1977) hallmark investigation of women's conceptions of morality outlines how the discourse of morality in general has punished and pathologized women. In conceptualizing a feminine construction of reality that is relationally oriented, she uses this framework to describe and explain women's moral decision making. Because, according to Gilligan, traditional male conceptualizations of morality are built on absolute standards and concrete principles that exist in isolation, women, and their moral understandings, have been seen as diffuse, immature, and lacking in character. Gilligan, however, argues that this relational orientation is not a developmental deficiency, but a different
social and moral understanding: women and men simply conceptualize morality differently. But the issue grows more intense in its complexity. Sommers (1995), for instance, illustrates that women strive to become "good" by caring for others, a point to which Gilligan (1977, p. 484) adds:

the very traits that have traditionally defined the 'goodness' of women, their care for and sensitivity to the needs of others, are those that mark them as deficient in moral development. The infusion of feeling into their judgments keeps them from developing a more independent and abstract ethical conception in which concern for others derives from principles of justice rather than from compassion and care.

In other words, women strive to achieve a prescriptive standard of goodness, and are then devalued for it. This disorienting state of affairs can leave women feeling out of touch with their own experience, confused about their identity, and powerless to effect change, an Alice-in-Wonderland sensation of being at the mercy of a field of discourse.

"He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee, "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

Alice said, "Nobody can guess that."

"Why about you!" Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

"Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
"You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out — bang! just like a candle!"12

A Woman's Goodness

Collectively we share a discursively constructed understanding that being good is as much a part of being a woman as is being female. In fact, as Bepko and Krestan (1990) assert, to be a woman is to be good, and being good means that a woman KNOWS (sic) she is never good enough. In unbraiding the discourse of female goodness, they show how women live by a "code of goodness" that requires them to be meek, undemanding, competent, physically and emotionally appealing, attentive to and responsible for the needs of others, and — above all — bound to the code. Only in this way will women garner the affection, affirmation, and acceptance of others that confirms their goodness. According to Bepko and Krestan, the code of goodness is a powerful force in reconstituting women's subordination because by requiring women to tend to the needs and interests of others before their own, women find themselves feeling too tired, too guilty, or too weak to challenge this arrangement. Further, the code of goodness virtually assures compliance on the part of women by cultivating female passivity and nurturing the sacrifice of self that occurs

in adolescence (Gilligan and Brown, 1992; Pipher, 1994; Rogers, 1993). Bepko and Krestan's code of goodness has five injunctions. A woman must: be attractive, be a lady, be unselfish and of service, make relationships work, and be competent without complaint. The following discussion will address how these injunctions are entrenched within and sustained by the discourse of the strip joint as revealed in Sabrina's and Norm's testimonies.

**A woman must be attractive.** That a woman's physical attractiveness has been regarded as her most valuable asset has been argued so often and so extensively the idea needs little discussion here. Indeed, in the strip joint, which is by design a forum for the spectacleization of woman, the emphasis on female attractiveness seems disproportionately low. This is not to say the emphasis is not strong, only to indicate that when compared with more conventional social and cultural settings, the strip joint's expectations of attractiveness are no more strident. In the strip joint (as elsewhere), a woman's face as well as her body, and especially its constituent sexualized parts — breasts, buttocks, legs, and pubic hair, are displayed, compared, complimented, criticized and rewarded. In the strip joint, new dancers fear rejection on the basis of their appearance. And in the strip joint, the dressing room is a staging area where costumes, make-up, and hairstyles are carefully applied and attractiveness painstakingly

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13 It is to comment on the widespread prevalence of this attractiveness norm for women that its character changes little when observed in such disparate settings.
constructed. This is a woman's job. Sabrina illustrates this idea in voicing her resentment of people who condemn her,

They're all worried about their so-called.... the wives are all worried about their husbands running off with these young vixens and spending all their money. I... my guy doesn't do that. I try to look my best most of the time and try to be... I try real hard to please him and make him happy and look beautiful. Try to look as beautiful as I can and be sexy and all that good stuff and try not to let me go to the dumps basically. A lot of these women don't care. They're all like, "Well he should accept me for the way I am." Well it ain't that way.

Sabrina's words here are helpful in seeing how the attractiveness norm, which to this point has merely replicated a general cultural expectation for female attractiveness, plays a more active role in the strip joint than can be seen at first glance. For in the discourse of the strip joint, it is strippers who are attractive and wives who are not. Norm illustrates this point:

And it's nice. She's pretty and provocative and funny and bright and he goes home and there's 300 pounds of lard that's standin' there bitchin' at him cause the rent ain't paid. Now, where would you rather be? Pretty simple stuff.

Elsewhere he claims that "guys want somebody prettier than their old lady to just sort of smile at 'em and be nice so they don't have to worry about the rent that's due and their old lady crappin' at 'em, and whatever." The
ideological effect of these statements is to sanction and reify the attractiveness norm by villainizing the wives who break it, valorizing the dancers who respect it, and validating the men who demand it. For dancers, this translates into less a lesson of "how to be", than a coerced understanding of "how not to be." In other words, while the strip joint invokes the first injunction of the code of goodness to extend and solidify broader cultural messages about the importance of female attractiveness, its greater role is to justify male interest in and need for the strip joint by finding wives in violation and strippers in accordance with a vital expectation of womanhood.

A woman must be a lady. If the first injunction of the code of goodness is used more to validate and valorize strip joint participation than to actually direct its content, the second injunction does both with equal force. As Bepko and Krestan (1990) explain, when a woman adopts the code of goodness, she adopts the injunction to be a lady, which requires her to control her impulses, to avoid anger, loudness, and challenges to authority and others; and finally, to suppress her own ego while soothing others'. Particularly problematic and paradoxical to dancers is that being a lady also requires a woman to control her emotional and expressive excesses, especially her sexuality. That the strip joint is designed to elicit and "feed upon" a woman's expression of her sexuality creates for dancers a sort of "damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't" situation that makes it impossible for, but at the same time expects, dancers to be "good".
Even at first glance the testimony of Sabrina's profile reveals how she accepts and experiences the expectation to be a lady despite the hostile environment of the strip joint. Time and again, because she is a "good" dancer, we see her avoiding conflict, suppressing rage, enduring insults, and excusing others. For instance, in one passage (not included in the profile) Sabrina describes that if another dancer were to intrude upon her dancing time (a substantial breech of etiquette because it detracts from her potential earnings), she would ignore it, but if it really made her mad, she would tell Norm "because I'd be angry and I gotta get that anger out." She contrasts her approach with the way other girls would respond — with angry yelling — by suggesting they are "troublemakers" while she is not. Clearly Sabrina understands and believes in the importance of being a lady, a belief that informs and directs how she should "be" both as a dancer, as well as a person who finds it necessary to manage the role, the social identity, of a dancer. The latter case is illustrated by her belief that a "good" daughter, a "good" sister, a "good" mother would not be a dancer, and so her job is to prevent these roles from crossing paths.

But it is Norm's testimony that most vividly illustrates how the strip joint convenes and sustains the injunction that teaches women that to be good they must be a lady.

The business is a guy that's driving his dump truck, it's hotter than hell outside, and he wants to come in, and his old lady's been on his ass for two weeks, and he wants to come in there and have a couple of beers and talk to somebody who's
gonna be nice to him. Real simple stuff. That's why for the most part, most agencies book girls that aren't tremendously photogenic. We look at the face, we look at the body to make sure that she's not butt ugly, and we look for that bright, happy smile. That's what sells.

In this passage, we see that the first injunction of the code of goodness, the attractiveness norm, is subjugated to the second. It is more important that dancers offer customers a pleasant, accepting, accommodating, and undemanding attitude than a dazzling physical display. In fact, as Norm suggests above, a "lady"-like attitude is the primary qualification for a dancer and it is also the single-most important factor for her success.

Unlike most jobs, this business relies on personalities. Which is the prime factor. Personality is more important than looks. Attitude in this business is everything. And we've proved time and time and time again that a girl that may be not quite as pretty as another girl, but has a better attitude, the guys like her more. Simply because she's a better person.

Repeatedly, insistently, diligently, Norm's testimony constructs and centralizes the theme of "attitude" (and its implicit modifier "lady"-like) to explain both success as a dancer and the reason for strip joint patronage. In this way he is able to appeal to, stabilize, and further entrench the second injunction of the code of goodness. He is also able to obscure and de-
emphasize the explicitly sexual content of the strip joint and the self-contradiction inherent in the phrase "good dancer."

A woman must be unselfish and of service. The third injunction of the code of goodness instructs women that to be good, they must be unselfish and of service to others, a prescription that, according to Bepko and Krestan (1990, p.24), "forms the core values of our female lives." Women, in adopting this injunction, learn to place others' happiness and needs in a privileged position and to relegate their own to a position that is systematically self-defeating, that is to ignore and/or deny their own needs, thereby insuring a perpetual state of weakness and subordination. In the strip joint, this injunction is embedded in Norm's construct of attitude, or as he emphasizes at one point, "Person-al-i-tee." Sabrina's testimony is filled with numerous examples that illustrate how she has embraced the proper attitude and learned to display the appropriate personality. In fact, she speaks with pride in demonstrating how she has learned to be unselfish as a dancer. Below she is responding to the question, how do you feel when you're up (on stage) dancing?

Usually it don't matter. If I'm putting on a good show, I'm making a decent amount of money, and the guys seem to be enjoying themselves, then I have a lot more fun. Especially if the guys... Even if I don't make a lot of money and the guys seem like they're having fun, that almost does it for me, makes my day. To me that means they like what I'm doing and they think I'm doing a good job. And they might
not tip me a whole bunch this time, but maybe next time.

Maybe next time they might bring a friend. Maybe.

In addition to demonstrating how Sabrina subjugates her own needs and interests to those of the "guys", her words here introduce an important theme in the discourse of the strip joint: money. To both strip joint participants and its outside observers, money serves as the ultimate discursive agent in explaining and accepting the stripping industry. For example, there is a common cultural assumption of "big money" to be made by strippers, a notion that inappropriately romanticizes the occupation and deceptively recruits participants. In Sabrina's and Norm's testimonies, the concept of "big money" is perpetuated in stories of the occasional but oh-so-exciting $20 tip; the weekend shifts where Sabrina "could pull a bill ($100)"; the frequency with which Sabrina out-earns her shift partner; and the reassurance given to her brother that Sabrina is "only doing this for the money." Barely mentioned, and never reconciled, are the numerous low-paying shifts Sabrina works in exchange for one good one or the self-limiting "dancer burn-out," which requires dancers to take time off work when they become too familiar to customers and/or too resentful of them. The net effect of this discourse is to distort proportion, to magnify reward while ignoring/denying cost, to inflate what is possible so it appears as probable.

Beyond the mystifying notion of "big money," strip joint discourse deploys a more mundane form of money that further organizes and sustains strip joint interaction. In this form, money is used in a way that
draws upon greater cultural norms that allows money to serve as an equalizing and/or neutralizing agent. For instance, Sabrina complains about guys that "overcoat you as a whore" by offering her money in exchange for sex. "You're up there and you're naked and stuff (and) there are guys who will try to make you feel bad about yourself, make comments like, $500 bucks for one night..." when Norm interrupts, "At least they're not insulting about it. If they said $20..." Although Sabrina does not accept his interpretation that the amount is what makes the offer inflammatory, his interjection reveals an important sedative property that money is seen to have. It takes the sting out of what would be otherwise unacceptable. Sabrina supports this idea when she instructs new dancers that unless the guys start tipping them, they are not required to disrobe. "Nobody likes taking their clothes off for free," she says by way of explanation. "Nobody does." The discourse of the strip joint is the discourse of capitalism, the language of exchange, where the omnipotence of money is accepted as doctrine, a doctrine that stratifies participants in a way that would be impossible if money did not have the power to transform a person into a commodity (Lingus, 1994). From Norm we hear why it is necessary that dancers endure the insults of customers, "You're relying on that guy's dollars for your living. Very simple step. You make him mad, he's not going to give you no money." In the strip joint, money speaks for itself. It justifies, punctuates, excuses, and absolves. It is all that needs to be said. Again, from Norm: "If you take (an) individual and you got (her) ego all
pumped up, then you hand them a stack of cash, are they gonna like doing that? Probably."

Returning this discussion to the third injunction of the code of goodness, that a good woman, in being unselfish, subordinates her own needs and interests to others', we see in the discourse of the strip joint an understanding that money is capable of satisfying whatever needs a dancer may have. Because a dancer can never be fully a woman in that her overt sexuality violates the code of goodness, if she has needs at all, they are likely superficial and materialistic, and because money serves as the ultimate anesthetic, it becomes the only necessary remedy. Dancers, then, in living up to the code of goodness, must wait for and accept whatever amount is offered and endure whatever indignities it purchases. In this way, money becomes for dancers not only acceptance and affection, but also vindication, a sign of their goodness. That supplication, humiliation, and self-subordination, might be understood as reward, prestige, and success attests to discursive success.

A woman must make relationships work. The fourth injunction of the code of goodness directs women to take the responsibility for maintaining relational harmony and repairing relational instability. According to Bepko and Krestan (1990), women have traditionally been required to be emotionally and physically nurturing at the same time remaining dependent and without financial means of their own. The net effect of this injunction is to laden women with responsibility but refuse them power. Women bear the burden for pleasing others, but part of what
makes them pleasing is their relative powerlessness and dependence on significant others. How the discourse of the strip joint sustains this injunction is easily and vividly seen in two distinct examples.

To begin with, the obvious hierarchy of the strip joint is clearly built upon the backs, the entire bodies, for that matter, of strippers. The testimony of Sabrina's profile provides ample evidence that she finds herself subordinate to club owners, agents, bartenders, and customers — even to the wives who are only symbolically present but nonetheless powerful. In short, dancers are made subordinate to virtually all other strip joint participants, a position of abject powerlessness that is rigidly enforced. In both Norm's words and Sabrina's we see a disciplinary code that leaves dancers in a position not unlike that of children. For instance, Norm explains that being an agent is "basically a big babysitting thing," and he repeatedly demonstrates that, like an ineffective parent, he feels frustrated and resentful that dancers are always challenging him, ignoring his authority, and disregarding his rules. He speaks of one such rule:

Lot of girls, they have problems with alcohol. There's a rule for them. They get one drink an hour. In order for a girl to reach that status, she has to have created a problem somewhere, like gotten drunk and fallen off the stage or somethin' stupid or left with a customer. As soon as they create one of those little faux pas, that's one of the little things that you do to make sure that she knows, number one, that she screwed up, and number two, the bar's not gonna
live with it, we're not gonna live with it, and she's gonna HAVE to behave herself.

This childlike stature with which dancers are endowed illustrates how the fourth injunction of the code of goodness ensnares women in a web of self-contradictory expectations. For if dancers are relegated to the role of children, it is impossible for them to operate with the maturity, wisdom, and nurturance that are so necessary to successful relationships. And then, to make matters worse, dancers' failure to construct and maintain successful relationships gives rise to the need for punishment and childlike discipline.

But the adult/child struggle that characterizes the dancer-agent relationship is only a small part of the story of a dancer's subordination and powerlessness. A far more pervasive force is at work ensuring the stability of this arrangement. Indeed, it is a force that precedes and thus contributes to the construction of dancer as child. In the discourse of the strip joint, females are organized into three specific categories. First, there are ladies, which I know about only because that's how I was identified by Norm and Sabrina. When I would call on the phone, whoever answered would say to the other, "It's the lady." In over 200 pages of interview transcript, this term appears only one other time, used by Norm to refer to a dancer he had worked with some time in the past. "Pretty lady," he said, "she didn't have to put up with that," referring to domestic abuse that he felt she enjoyed. This glaring omission suggests that ladies are a category of females not associated with the strip joint, and commenting only from my
sense of Sabrina and Norm's regard for me, it is a category likely characterized by somewhat positive attributes: perhaps education, manners, and, importantly, a non-judgmental attitude toward the strip joint.

A second category of females is wives, also unassociated with the strip joint, but regarded with contempt and disdain. Norm offers a description:

the middle American female who's butt ugly, doesn't exercise, doesn't give a shit about her house and sits there and carps at her old man all the time, thinks anybody who does this is a whore because she's big competition for her...

And finally, in the remaining category of females, there are girls, and these are the females of the strip joint. The following discussion will show that although the expectations for goodness are there, in the strip joint, there is no such thing as a "good" "girl."

To be a girl is to have a particular nature and a particular social position. For instance, Sabrina tells us that the transition from performing topless to performing nude was difficult for her because topless dancing is "no big deal." "To a girl, it's not as hard (as stripping)." Also girls are inferior to men, as Sabrina reveals.

I'd let Norm know as soon as possible 'cause Norm usually takes care of the club owners 'cause I'm young, and I'm a girl, and I'm a dancer. So they don't respect me as much as Norm, just because he's a male.
Sabrina's words here are illuminative for two reasons: first, because they reveal that she categorizes herself consistent with discursive conventions, and secondly, because, in itemizing the reasons for her lack of power and credibility in the strip joint, they demonstrate that both being a girl AND being a dancer are grounds for devaluation. In general, as constructed by the discourse of the strip joint, girls are emotionally unstable, vulnerable, lacking in personal responsibility, uncooperative, fickle, and shallow. In becoming a dancer, and it is important to emphasize that all dancers are first and foremost girls (in fact, the terms are used almost synonymously), girls become unruly, belligerent, incompetent, disloyal, and despised.

"Dancers are bitches," Sabrina declares, "plain and simple. Plain and simple." Elsewhere she explains,

> When they get to work and they bitch and whine 'cause they're not makin' any money and they won't dance at all. They make everybody angry at them 'cause they do stupid things. If they're underage they run around the bar where they're not supposed to. If they're older, they get too drunk, make a nuisance of themselves. Geez! There's so many things. There's so many of them. Or some of 'em, they just love fucking you over. It's like they wait for their chance.

What is heard in the testimony of both Sabrina and Norm is that "girls" are incapable of a "normal" life, that in fact these women need the strip joint because "they don't do rules well," and that they are very much in need of the opportunity the strip joint offers them. What isn't heard,
however, is an attempt to reconcile the inherent contradictions in this discursive construction. For example, Sabrina complains that dancers too frequently are late for work or don't show up at all, a situation she explains by saying that dancers

  can't handle getting up on time and doing the things you have to do in order to hold a normal job. So dancing is more flexible; you pick your own shifts, if you do a good job and do what you're supposed to, you get whatever you want.

That this flexibility does not, in fact, assist dancers in meeting their work obligations, that it actually facilitates the high rate of tardiness and absenteeism she describes, is counter to her claim that the strip joint is a beneficial environment. Comfortably shrouding this contradiction is the belief that when things go wrong in the strip joint, it is "girls" who are to blame.

In addition, Norm, in his testimony, repeatedly and pointedly situates the strip joint in a broader social and institutional context that also receives blame for that which is wrong with the strip joint. For example, he claims, "Our society has created a level of individuals here... that are not capable of survivin' in another mode." He faults television and other media for destroying women's self-esteem with their idealized portrayals of female beauty, for creating a sense of inadequacy that the strip joint successfully soothes. He bitterly denounces the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, the state agency with regulatory authority over the strip joint, as a "bunch of little tin gods" who are negligent, insensitive, and
inefficient in their duties and therefore responsible for whatever illegal behavior goes on in the strip joint.

In both Sabrina's testimony and Norm's, the strip joint is exonerated, while others, both internal and external, are found blameworthy. Of particular utility in ignoring the mistreatment of dancers is the construction of "girls" as a category of females who are devalued and dehumanized. Through this form of discourse, dancers' powerlessness and subordination are essentialized and justified.

But powerlessness and subordination are only part of the injunction that requires women to make relationships work. A second example shows how this position gets cultivated into relational dependence. Dancers in the strip joint are able to succeed only through the benevolence and cooperation of others — by receiving a good schedule from their agent, by receiving proper treatment from bartenders, and by receiving generous tips from customers. That this results in relational dependence for dancers is self-evident. In a somewhat unusual and unintended illustration, Sabrina below reveals one way in which she experiences this dependence, a dependence that takes on even greater significance if the passage is read through a psychoanalytic lens. She is speaking about a six-foot metal pole that rises, phallic-like, from the center of the dance floor:

Q: Why is the pole there?
A: It's almost like a security blanket. Even if you can't do anything on the pole, it's a security blanket (because) you got somethin' to hold on to. Basically you can walk around it and
you can lean against it, lift your legs up... it's just very comforting cause like... when you don't have anything there, it's like it gives you a little more to do instead of just doing your normal thing. You can hold on to it... It's a real security blanket. If there's a place that doesn't have a pole, it's real hard for me to dance there 'cause I'm so used to my routines with a pole there that I feel kinda naked without it. If I go to reach out for it and it's not there (chuckle)... It's kinda strange.

A woman must be competent without complaint. In Bepko and Krestan's (1990) code of goodness, the fifth and final injunction obligates women to a standard of poise and control that disguises and obviates whatever unmet needs they harbor, whatever vulnerability and dissatisfaction they experience. Women are expected to "hold up well under strain," to endure discomfort with grace, and to succeed in the face of insurmountable opposition. That strip joint dancers are held bound to this injunction is made glaringly obvious by Sabrina, who describes her efforts to conform to and uphold this norm of womanhood, a norm made all the more difficult in light of practices that legitimize her as an object of scorn and ridicule. Throughout Sabrina's profile, she reveals the humiliating strain she experiences at the hands of agents, customers, and bartenders, as well as her efforts to maintain whatever control and dignity she can. The following passage offers an especially poignant example:

(I told one guy off.) I'm usually pretty cool, but that guy really made me mad because all these girls, they work hard. I work
hard. I try to put on the best show possible, and if they don't like it, they can leave. It's their choice. They can get away from the rack. I can't...You can't tell 'em off. You can, but sometimes it's not in your best interest... 'Cause if you break, if you start yelling at him, then all the guys go, "She's a bitch. I ain't tipping her."

In the strip joint, verbal assaults against dancers are neither inappropriate nor unexpected. As Norm explains,

when (the customers) do that kind of stuff, it's sexual harassment. It's no different than if they were in an office or anywhere else. The difference is that this is obviously a male chauvinist thing because... you're relying on that guy's dollars for your living. Very simple step. You make him mad, he's not going to give you no money.

If the dancer objects to such treatment, it is she who is in violation, not the customer; she is in violation of the code of goodness. In such a way, complacency and subservience on the part of dancers are nurtured and cultivated. They are simply a vital part of the performance for which dancers are being paid.

While the preceding discussion attends explicitly to identifying and exposing the different injunctions of the code of goodness embedded within the narratives of both Sabrina and Norm, it also brings into focus the way in which Norm is able to articulate and assert key themes that both explain and excuse the practices of the strip joint, themes that Sabrina then
reinforces in her own testimony. That Sabrina is unable to challenge Norm's meanings and understandings, that in fact she consistently echoes what he says, reflects the way men's subjectivity so often, so easily, and so unnoticeably dominates and directs women's own interpretations of their experience. But even more importantly, the text reveals how Sabrina is induced into acting on Norm's subjectivity, into accepting and adopting the "reality" he puts forth, into performing the script he has written and becoming the dancer he desires, and how in doing so, Sabrina reconstitutes Norm's reality; how she helps create the impression that his subjectivity is objective, that his opinions are knowledge, and his knowledge, truth. This happens each time she adopts the appropriate lady-like attitude and out-earns the other dancer. It happens when she grows so resentful of strip joint customers that "her money goes in the toilet" and she decides to take time off as a way of fixing the situation. It happens when she blames wives and their selfishness for driving their husbands to strip joints. And in numerous other situations and events, it happens.

**Conclusion**

This analysis need not end here, as numerous points could yet be made and examples offered. But to continue would be to prolong an exercise in the obvious, to "beat a dead horse," as the saying goes. For the preceding material is sufficient to demonstrate how the discourse of acceptable womanhood forms a bed of quicksand that entices dancers into the strip joint and then ensnares them there. They go to earn money —
many of them for their boyfriends — which is their moral responsibility. But in so doing, they become immoral. Having violated the code of goodness, though, they are still bound to its injunctions; in fact, now more than ever they need to demonstrate their goodness, and "the code" is the only way to do so. But the code is self-contradictory in the best of circumstances, let alone when it is being regressively invoked, that is, as a way of digging oneself out a violation. In the strip joint, the code of goodness becomes a nightmarish script, as dancers do not receive the contempt that wives do, but neither do they receive the regard reserved for ladies. Instead, they are recognized and appreciated for their participation in the game of goodness, and thus encouraged to continue — and then subjected to its rules, which call for their own devaluation.

Much of what has been written about the strip joint focuses on the obvious aspect of performance and how dancers and customers collectively negotiate the illusion of a sexual encounter (e.g., Boles and Garbin, 1974; Enck and Preston, 1988; Salutin, 1971). But to deal only with the obvious is to be taken in by the hidden, the mystifying influence of discourse and that allows us to settle too readily on answering superficial questions without probing for underlying problematic issues. For instance, if, as Boles and Garbin claim, dancers and customers in the strip joint are staging a "cynical performance" (Goffman, 1963), one that offers the potential of sex even when there is no real expectation of engaging in it, what about that illusion is satisfying? What makes it worth paying for? If the answer is an experience of intimacy, however false or fleeting, as the authors suggest,
what are the factors that go into making up men's definition of intimacy that the strip joint so capably addresses? If sex, even a make-believe sexuality, is the primary product offered for sale in the strip joint, as Salutin claims, why is it that shows featuring male strippers designed for a female audience are so qualitatively and quantitatively different from those of the strip joint (Petersen and Dressel, 1982)?

These questions are not to make light of the performance aspect of the strip joint, but merely to ask for further scrutiny before concluding what is being performed. Most overtly, of course, is the performance of the bad woman, advertised as "hot," "naughty," and "wild." At this level, strip joint architecture, with its windowless design and offer of "discreet parking," promises an experience of the forbidden, the sleazy, the sexual. At this level, the bodies of women are transformed with silicone, tattoos, piercings, and costumes, and their identities transformed with stage names and other passing devices (Goffman, 1963). At this level, dancers are able to use the mode of performance to "neutralize" their behavior (Salutin, 1971), to separate and insulate their selves from the spectacle that the dancer has become.

But as the preceding analysis shows, there is another layer to this performance, another level of reality to the strip joint. For beneath the portrayal of the bad woman, there exists the portrayal of the good woman. It is a portrayal that requires of dancers no identity or other bodily transformation. It is a script they've learned and practiced throughout their lives, a performance that is supposed to bring them reward and
endear them to men. It is what the customers have come to see. To this extent, Norm is right: "It ain't about sex;" it is about the code of goodness. This is the show the strip joint offers.

Bepko and Krestan (1990) articulate an alternative discourse to replace the code of goodness that currently governs women's moral behavior. They propose a code of balance, which substitutes the injunctions of the code of goodness with the following directives: Be comfortable, be direct, be responsive, be nurturing, be firm. It is interesting to speculate what the strip joint might look like, indeed if the strip joint would exist, if this formula were to replace the code of goodness in our general cultural discourse. It is interesting to speculate who and what strippers might become once they — and the rest of us — develop a different vocabulary, an improved vocabulary, that allows us to conceive of and describe women with dimensionality, complexity, and a full and sacred humanity. This movement is already afoot; I hope this paper will make some further contribution.
References


Feminist Social Psychology: Developing Theory and Practice (pp. 77-95).
Philadelphia: Open University Press.
Appendix

Regina M. Yaroch
Application for Review of the Protection of Human Subjects in Proposed Research

I. Project title and prospectus

The proposed research project consists of the analysis of an existing text using a critical feminist approach designed to explore the cultural forces and prescriptions that interact with and influence the meaning of the stripping industry as experienced by industry participants. I am interested in examining the discourse generated by and within the stripping industry, and particularly in deconstructing this discourse to examine its effects on the cultural inculcation of female sexuality. The text is an interview transcript that I developed during the Spring quarter of 1995 when I was a first year graduate student taking a qualitative methods class taught by Dr. Susan Poulsen in the department of Speech Communication. With Dr. Poulsen's guidance, I developed an interview guide; conducted a series of three interview sessions, each with the same two informants; and transcribed the interviews to produce the transcript I now wish to analyze. My intention is not to make broad conclusions about strippers or other industry participants as a group, but to develop a sense of how cultural forces are understood by two particular industry participants and to consider how this understanding interacts with these cultural forces.

This research is important for a number of reasons:
• the Portland metropolitan area alone has over 45 strip clubs and bars, yet the stripping industry has received little scholarly inquiry and virtually no critical inquiry
• strippers notoriously face dangerous and exploitive working conditions
• the stripping profession draws heavily from women who have been victimized by physical and sexual abuse, who are drug- and/or alcohol-addicted, and who have been otherwise socially marginalized
• and most importantly, the commoditization of female sexuality, which is the foundation of the stripping industry, transcends and permeates the experience of all women and most men

This research is not being conducted pursuant to a contract or grant, nor has it been reviewed before.

II. Exemption claims for waiver of review

This research falls within the guidelines of the Human Subjects Review Committee's policy that outline the conditions under which committee review is waived. Item number four in this section cites that "Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, and records" is exempt from committee review "if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. The first criterion here, the use of existing data, is clearly established, so the following discussion will address the second issue, which is concerned with protecting the identity of research subjects.
The long interview format that I used as my data gathering method requires a number of precautions to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of subjects, especially in regard to my particular topic, which does have some association with deviance. Addressing the issue of anonymity, my subjects were known to me only by their first names, which is a common practice in the stripping industry. While this habit is unusual and uncomfortable for most segments of our society, here — in the margins — it appears to be a naturally-occurring convention designed to protect the anonymity of strip joint participation, both for customers as well as dancers, who adopt stage names in order to disguise their identity and change them to enhance it. By electing to adapt to my subjects’ standards and stay on a first-name-only basis, I have gone a long way in preserving anonymity, which, as mentioned, is made difficult by the interview process. Also, I will disguise the names of other people and commercial establishments that appear in the text in order to avoid "identifying links".

In addition, a number of safeguards have been taken to protect the confidentiality of my interview informants. First, in the transcript, on the tape, and in all other documentation and storage labeling, I use only the stage name of my dancer informant, which is itself pseudonym; it is the name under which she performs and by which her occupation is publicly known and advertised. While I have elected to retain her actual stage name instead of assigning yet another alias, in deference to methodological considerations, this authenticity does not come at the expense of confidentiality because she is not the only dancer in the city using this particular stage name. Further, I have assigned an alias to my other informant in all reporting. In order to establish academic integrity, it is necessary to provide some background description of my informants, but, in the event this research is accepted for publication, the city in which it was conducted will be disguised.

III. Subject recruitment

The study includes two subjects who were selected by virtue of having advertised in the Sunday newspaper. Though small, the sample is adequate for my current research objective, which as I suggested above, is not generalization but specification. My informants include a dancer and a man who is her romantic as well as business partner, whom I contacted in response to an ad they had placed in the employment section of the Sunday paper under the category "Dancers," as they own a booking agency that hires dancers for various clubs throughout town. I identified myself as a student/researcher who was interested not in becoming a dancer, but in learning about them. The woman to whom I spoke was immediately receptive and invited me to meet her at a dance "contest" in a local strip bar later that same week. I did so, meeting not only her, but also several other dancers. Several days later, I called my initial contact and she agreed to be interviewed at her home. When I arrived, her partner, whom I had also met at the dance contest, was present and repeatedly imposed himself upon my interview with the dancer. Sensing his eagerness to talk, I assured him I would set up an interview with him in the near future, which I did.

IV. Informed, voluntary consent

Because this proposal is concerned with examining existing data, my comments in regard to informed consent are directed to the process by which the data was initially generated. Before interviewing my subjects, I described the nature of my research and asked
them if they had any questions or concerns, and I verbally reviewed with them the following issues of voluntary participation: the right to withhold answers, the right to withdrawal from participation, and an assurance of confidentiality. Both subjects indicated they understood and agreed with the project and its provisions as described, and confirmed their informed, voluntary consent to participate. I did not pursue written documentation of this process because neither subject wanted an official record of his/her participation and because electing not to do guaranteed the anonymity of my subjects. It is important to note here that this disregard for proprietary documentation shown by my subjects seems to be representative of the stripping industry, which works on a cash-only, first-name only basis. One attempt I made to negotiate copyright release from the publisher of an industry newspaper was met with the response that "he didn't have time to sign stuff like that." He then advised me to either forge his signature or to find a less reputable copy center that would not require the release form. Because of this kind of attitude, I believe that insisting on written consent may have threatened my informants' candidness or their participation altogether. However, the other point that is important here, is that of my subjects' anonymity. Because I was using only two informants, one male and one female, and because of the sensitive nature of the disclosure, it was necessary to take extensive care in order to ensure that specific information could not be tied to a specific informant; foregoing written consent was the only way to do this. Please note that this decision is in accordance with the criteria established in section IV on the Elements of Informed Consent, questions one and two, which appear on p. 8 of the Application for the Review of Protection of Human Subjects in Proposed Research.

V. First-person scenario

I was sitting on the couch at home and the Investigator was sitting next to me. She was asking about my job as a dancer and I was describing the situation to her. (My partner) was there too because he was interested in what was going on. Sometimes the Investigator asked me questions and sometimes she asked (my partner), depending on what she wanted to know. A couple of times the phone rang and either I answered it or (my partner) did because we still had to run the business, which means taking the calls whenever we can...

VI. Potential risks and safeguards

The potential risks involved in the proposed research is limited to the potential threat to my informants' identity, and I have already identified the numerous steps that have been taken in this regard: verbal informed consent, the use of pseudonyms, and the disguise of other identifying links, such as the location of the research and the names of individual people and commercial establishments.

In regard to the earlier data-gathering phase of the research, certainly some risk existed to my informants in the form of discomfort that might be experienced as a result of disclosing information about behavior regarded as deviant. However, as my subjects pointed out to me, the stigma of the stripping industry is with them day in and day out, and an opportunity to account for the profession was appreciated. In this regard, any potential discomfort experienced by my subjects during the interview can be seen as minimal, and is certainly outweighed by the opportunity to seize a public voice.
Appendix

VII. Potential benefits of the proposed study

The obvious benefit of the proposed research is what has been termed by feminist scholars as demystification, the process by which science refuses to allow powerlessness to be further punctuated by lack of inquiry. In focusing on the stripping industry, I am challenging the taken-for-granted prescriptions that foster it and also developing knowledge that can, in turn, create the possibility for social change. The potential beneficiaries here include dancers, who stand to benefit from a critical examination of their circumstances and from the opportunity to speak publicly. I recall an incident that occurred during one of my interview sessions when my dancer informant was complaining about the "yuppies" who write letters to the editor condemning the adult entertainment industry and all its participants. Although she resented the implication that she was immoral and depraved, she felt powerless to respond; a letter to address her own point of view was beyond her consideration. My proposed research offers the potential to compensate for this powerlessness and to challenge the system that selectively privileges some and exploits others. This research also has the potential to illuminate part of the process by which female sexuality has been culturally constructed and commoditized. In that this construction transcends and permeates the experience of all women and most men, this illumination is an important contribution to our understanding of interpersonal experience and to our system of social relations.

VII. Records and distribution

Subject confidentiality in the event of future publication or discussion will be preserved by the use of pseudonyms and the alteration of other identifying links, as already described. For instance, I will reveal only that the research was conducted in a metropolitan area in the Pacific northwest and I will assign aliases to commercial establishments and individuals who are identified in the text. Because informed consent was negotiated verbally, and because I neither knew nor recorded the last names of my participants, either in writing or on tape, the safekeeping of documents and other records generates little concern. The tapes and the transcripts have been and will remain stored without surnames; in addition, these records identify my female informant only by her stage name.
Appendix

Informed Consent

As already described, informed consent was informally and verbally negotiated. The following points were discussed:

- I explained before the interviews that I was a student interested in finding out about the dancing industry.
- I emphasized to my subject before the interviews that his/her participation in the interview process was entirely voluntary.
- I assured my subject before the interviews that he/she had the right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to terminate the interviews whenever he/she decided.
- I assured my subject that care would be taken to preserve the confidentiality of his/her answers, that is, to preserve and present the information in such a way so as to prevent linking it with him or her.
- I explained that I did not yet know if and how a report of the information would be prepared, but the research was being conducted for academic purposes; I further explained that my subject would not benefit directly by participating in the interview, but that the information he/she disclosed might be used to benefit others.
Appendix

First Interview Schedule

This interview was conducted with my primary informant on Thursday, April 27, 1995.

1. How did you come to be a dancer?
2. Tell me about your job.
3. Describe a typical work shift.
4. What is the best place to dance? Why?
5. What is the worst place to dance? Why?
6. Tell me about your customers.
7. How do people react when you tell them what you do?
8. What makes a good dancer?
9. How do you feel when you're dancing?
10. Tell me about your life outside of dancing.
11. What about your boyfriend(s)/husband: what does he think of your job as a dancer?
12. Describe the relationship you have with the other dancers.
13. What makes a good dancer?
14. What kind of person couldn't make it as a dancer?

Second Interview Schedule

This interview was conducted with my second informant on Wednesday, May 10, 1995.

1. Establish his background/experience in the business.
   - What prompted you to start your own agency?
2. Describe the day-to-day operation of your business.
3. What is the biggest headache in your business?
4. What is the biggest reward?
5. Describe the "typical" agent.
   - How are you different from this?
   - How are you similar?
6. How do people respond when you tell them what you do for a living?
7. If you were hiring somebody to manage an agency, what kind of person would you look for?
8. If I were starting my own agency, what advice would you give me?
9. Tell me about dancers.
   - age, background, education, etc.
   - habits, personality, motivation, etc.
10. What kind of girl couldn't make it as a dancer?
11. Tell me about the customers.
12. Describe an ideal night at the Double Dribble.
13. What would you say to people who might try to shut down a nude dancing establishment?
Appendix

Third Interview Schedule

This interview was conducted with my primary informant during the last full week of May, 1995.

1. What do dancers talk about?
   • Rumors?  • Stories?  • Jokes?
2. In one of our earlier interviews, you mentioned a guy who was part of your own clientele. What does it mean to have your own clientele?
3. When you’re hiring a new dancer, how do you decide if she’s got what it takes?
   • What does it take?
4. Pretend I’m a new dancer. Take me through my first couple of days on the job.
5. Tell me about the pole.
6. Describe the perfect dancer.
7. Describe the typical dancer.
8. What do you know now about being a dancer that you wish you had known at the beginning?
9. How has being a dancer changed you?
10. What do you see yourself doing in 10 years?
11. What would you do in each of the following situations:
   • Another dancer talking to a guy at the rack while you’re dancing?
   • Another agent trying to steal one of your dancers?
   • One of your dancers stealing from the dressing room?
12. I’m going to go through a list of terms that you used in earlier interviews. Define them for me.
   • Couch dancing  • Bearbag dancing  • Outcall  • Pink pony rides
   • Dancer burnout  • Hustle  • Strip joint  • Soft show
   • Meat rack  • Blonde goddess
13. I’ve seen guys throw money on the floor and I’ve seen them throw it on the rack. Any difference?
14. I’ve also seen a man bring a dancer into the Dribble and receive money from another man. Can you explain what might have been happening?
15. Is there anything else you want to tell me about dancing that I haven’t thought to ask?
Appendix

The following revisions are being made, per Human Subjects Committee request, to the application for Human Subjects Approval made by Regina M. Yaroch (SSN# 220-68-6176) regarding her research entitled "A Feminist Reading of Strip Joint Discourse."

II. Exemption claims for waiver of review (subject confidentiality)

In order to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of my primary informant, a dancer who performs under a stage name, I will assign yet an additional pseudonym to further disguise her. This modification is being made in response to the committee's concern and is intended to protect both her "stage" and her "real" identities.

VII. Records and distribution

All tapes and transcripts will be stored in the manner previously indicated, but will also be secured in a locked box privately maintained by the researcher, as requested by the committee.
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
Research and Sponsored Projects

DATE:       July 8, 1996
TO:         Regina M. Yaroch         SSN# 220-68-6176
FROM:       Laurie Skokan, Chair. HSRRC, 1995-96
RE:         HSRRC Waived Review of Your Application titled "A Feminist Reading of Strip Joint Discourse"

Your proposal is exempt from further HSRRC review, and you may proceed with the study.

Even with the exemption above, it was necessary by University policy for you to notify this Committee of the Proposed research and we appreciate your timely attention to this matter. If you make changes in your research protocol, the Committee must be notified. This approval is valid for one year from date of issue.

c: Maureen Orr Eldred
   Priya Kapoor, Project Advisor

waiver memo