

Striptease Spectators: Live and Imaginary

- [Judith Lynne Hanna](#)

Abstract

In the United States, adult entertainment striptease (also called exotic dance, nude dancing, and topless dancing) has both live and imaginary spectators. The real audience consists of those who actually enter a club (cabaret, theater), such as patrons and club personnel. However, there are people who only imagine what exotic dance is. I will comment on real and imaginary exotic dance spectators, the values they have, the actions they take that impact exotic dance, and the implications of these actions. A mosaic of contested meanings of exotic dance affects its existence or modification as well as American civil liberties. There are some feminist and uninformed imaginary spectators. Most active is an absent, imaginary audience of a segment of the politically active Christian Right that adheres to its interpretation of Scripture. Imaginary spectators are usually blind and deaf to the actual language of a dance form. Some believe exotic dance to be sinful and/or to cause crime, property depreciation, and disease, contrary to scientific evidence. These spectators' actions in many places have destroyed the contemporary genre of exotic dance, hurt the industry economically, and caused the loss of jobs. Actual spectators, patrons who expect to see the same full nudity and sexy dance movements that are seen in "high" ("elite") forms of art such as ballet, opera, modern dance, and theater, believe in free expression and unfettered enterprise and join the defense of exotic dance.

In the United States, adult entertainment striptease (also called exotic dance, nude dancing, and topless dancing) has both real and imaginary spectators. The real audience consists of those who actually enter a club (cabaret, theatre), such as patrons and club personnel. However, there are absent objectors -- including feminists, the uninformed, and the fundamentalist Christian Right -- who only imagine what exotic dance is. Obviously, the degree of knowledge and discourse about exotic dance that these two types of spectators have runs from knowledgeable to misinformed, and their interpretations and experiences are vastly different.

In this article I explain what exotic dance is and who the dancers are. Then I discuss the values that real and imaginary exotic dance spectators have, the actions they take that impact exotic dance, and the implications of these actions. Although there are exotic dance clubs where males perform for gay men and clubs where males perform for women, my attention is on the dominant form of exotic dance -- females dancing for men in close to 4,000 clubs nationwide. Now women also come to these clubs. There exists a mosaic of contested meanings of exotic dance in which the agency of different audiences, positive and negative, palpable and imaginary, affect the existence or modification of exotic dance, the economy, and American civil liberties.

My research on exotic dance in the United States began in 1995 when I was asked to be an expert court witness in a First Amendment case. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees the civil liberties of free expression and separation of church and state. A planner on the location and effects of exotic dance and a lawyer representing dancers and owners of exotic dance clubs in Seattle, Washington, had discovered my anthropological research on dance as nonverbal communication (Hanna 1983, 1987, 1988). They asked me to apply to exotic dance the

semiotic, sociolinguistic paradigm I had used since the 1960s to study dance in Africa, on school playgrounds, and in American theatres. Consequently, I have learned much though working with 59 attorneys on 125 legal cases in 29 states and the District of Columbia. In the process I have observed and interviewed dancers, patrons, and management (in 146 clubs), as well as members of their communities, including those in city, county, and state legislative bodies and courtrooms. I did not dance in exotic dance clubs to better understand them, as did some scholars such as Katherine Frank (2002) and R. Danielle Egan (2006). I can't wear high heels; besides I was over thirty. However, I observed innumerable dances and analyzed in detail some videos of dancers' movements (Hanna 2012).

I have not found any single theory, model or method that explains striptease spectatorship. The disciplines of anthropology, dance, English, history, law, semiotics, sociology, and the work of Susan Bennett on theatre audiences, which does not include striptease spectators, inform my paper. Reception theory applied to literature and film to account for the fact that a single text is interpreted in different ways by different viewers is applicable to the "text" or performance of exotic dance. Anthropologists examine the text and its context (culture, history, ecology, and politics), and the relationship between them. Sociologist George Ritzer's four-level model (2010) for the integration of micro and macro levels of social analysis directs attention to the complexity of diverse exotic dance spectators: (1) macro-objective -- the U.S. constitution and state and local laws constrain spectator actions, (2) macro-subjective -- culture, norms, and values distinguish the approach of two general spectator groups toward exotic dance, (3) micro-objective -- exotic dance industry individual stakeholders and exotic dance adversaries take specific actions, and (4) micro-subjective -- individual spectators have their own perceptions and beliefs.

Exotic Dance

What is the controversial exotic dance? It has been dismissed as sin, sex work or just women taking off their clothes and wiggling, displaying their genitals, cupping their breasts, shaking and shimmying, and bumping and grinding in a "strip joint," a term characterizing low-end bars. However, exotic dance, as nearly all dance genres, is purposeful, intentionally rhythmical, culturally patterned, nonverbal body movement communication in time and space, using effort, and having its own criteria for excellence. Rooted in the belly dance first seen in America in 1893 and in burlesque thereafter, exotic dance is a form of theatre art. It is artistic expression in the sense of being a learned skill, creative and imaginative, and communicating within an artistic style that is somewhat "risqué" adult play, a fanciful teasing. In exotic dance more of the body is disclosed than is ordinarily seen in public. Like a joke's punch line, contemporary exotic dance has stripping to nudity, which has many meanings, from eroticism to art in motion, honesty, the body as God's gift and worthy of the gaze, to parody. The movement is supposed to be sexy. Exotic dance has two parts. First there is a stage dance for the entire audience, and second, there is a dance for a patron who pays a fee for a personal dance to create or fulfill his own fantasies. Private dances may be in the general audience area, a secluded space, or a private room and may include dancing on a patron's lap (a "lap dance") or against a seated patron's body, close as in social slow or booty dancing. For a "private" dance in Washington, D.C. a patron pays extra to stand right next to the front of the stage for several minutes while the dancer focuses on him alone.

What exotic dance is called certainly has implications for public perception, business, and governmental policy. Labels have connotations that can color, sharpen, and diffuse meaning. Many in the adult entertainment industry prefer the term "exotic dance" or "entertainer" to other terms. But for political reasons, the term "sex worker" (which, among the general public, commonly refers to a prostitute) -- has been coopted by some well-educated exotic dancers. They have redefined sex work to refer to any sort of labor in which sexual pleasure or entertainment is provided in exchange for money. Workers with some similarities are assumed to be stronger when they band together. Dave Manack, associate publisher of the industry's *Exotic Dancer's Club Bulletin*, says, "It seems doubtful

that anyone in our industry would willingly identify themselves as working in the 'sex industry.' We've never referred to it that way in our magazines or at the Expo, ever. 'Sex worker' is a damaging term; it refers to a prostitute, not a dancer." In the hundred-plus clubs I visited, I never heard a dancer refer to herself as a sex worker nor have I heard patrons or club management use that label. Furthermore, many actors and singers in plays and opera offer sexual enjoyment onstage in exchange for money and would reject the label of sex worker. Although prostitution and stripping are coterminous in many parts of the world, it is not common in the United States. Well-managed clubs do not permit prostitution or dancers socializing with patrons outside the club.

Dancers are viewed by some imaginary spectators as fallen women and exploited objects of the male gaze. Of course, if women have problems in their lives, they do not always leave them at the club threshold as they enter. Most dancers in the clubs I have visited (and others who have written about their experiences) assert that they are independent subjects creating art and entertainment, not submissive objects. They feel empowered by the financial independence they achieve and talk about the increased self-confidence and self-esteem gained from successfully facing strangers and winning their appreciation. Many identify themselves as feminists and think that dancers should be the ones to decide if, when, and under what circumstances they feel oppressed. A number of exotic dance supporters consider that the dancer's choice to place her body within a financial transaction does not reduce her to a commodity any more than a model, actor, or athlete would be by choosing their respective professions.

Dancers range in education, appearance, ethnicity, and age. Craig Duling, general manager of the Crazy Horse in San Francisco, California, said:

I was shocked by what I learned about my own people. For instance, one has a graduate degree in math. Another one is a microbiologist for NASA in Mountainview. Phaj, who's from India, is a banking officer at Wells Fargo in the commercial lending department Sterling just passed her oral examination to be in the San Francisco Police Department, passed the agility test, passed the written test, passed every interview so far, and if she passes the polygraph examination, she's going into the police academy. Brittany just graduated with her master's degree in chemistry from Berkeley. Boalt Hall Law School is one of the top five law schools in the nation; we just had Lola get accepted into Boalt Hall. We have another one, Sasha, who's in law school at the University of San Francisco. We have two registered licensed dental hygienists. These are no puny, Mickey Mouse jobs. I've got 80 of these that I've got written down, out of 109 dancers. . . . What [California Assemblyman Charles] Calderon said on TV, was that dancers come out of the industry, they end up either addicted to drugs or other substances and with no skill set whatsoever, and end up on Medicare, Medicaid, Medi-Cal, or other social programs that cost the state money and therefore the industry that causes them to be like this ought to pay for it. That's just flat-out wrong, and our dancers prove it (ACE 2008).

I also met dancers who are accountants, artists, athletes, ballet and modern dancers, college students, stockbrokers, married women, single moms, and empty-headed high-school dropouts. What they all have in common is that they are all earning income, all doing a job. Some dancers also have full-time day employment. Exotic dancing may be the only income for some women, for others it is part-time allowing them to earn extra income, get exercise, defy social norms, and have flexible time to go to school or care for their children. Uneducated women have limited options for post-dancing work.

There are imaginary spectators who claim women are coerced into the stigmatized business of adult entertainment. Other than isolated cases involving foreigners, various other routes to walking onstage exist. Demi Moore's aggressive championing of her film *Striptease*, and the display of her own body, which was at the film's promotional heart, not only signaled a heightened mainstream interest in exotic dance but also lured some women onstage. Most take up exotic dance out of a need for money. Others go onstage as a lark, a dare, or as a rebellious act in defiance of highly restrictive

parents or religious upbringing. There are runaways from tedium; from dead-end, low-paying jobs; and from dysfunctional domestic situations. Misty decided that if her body was marketable enough that people would come to see it and pay money, then she was going to cash in on that. A dancer at Rachel's Club in West Palm Beach remarked:

Most people know this business is a huge cash machine, but most don't recognize its full potential powers. I was taught to believe that "Strippers" or "Entertainers" were desperate and on drugs, and also that the clubs were seedy and dirty. It was not until I was 33 that I actually visited a true strip club. . . . I was hooked. . . . In my eyes, nude beautiful women are works of art. Having the opportunity to watch dancers and have their company is a luxury and erotic treat. I personally think the "Entertainer" is a service to society.

Aspasia wrote to me that she found dancing "is sooo healing. . . . If naked women generate pleasure and happiness, we need more naked women, not less! Speaking from experience dancing, naked women have a calming effect on men in our culture." A businesswomen like Jane in Las Vegas dances to earn quick money for new capital investment. Angela was an anthropology student at Tulane on a scholarship that didn't cover all her expenses. So she started tending bar at an exotic dance club in New Orleans. Seeing that the dancers earned far more, she decided to go onstage. Some women need affirmation of their attractiveness. Gabriel followed the common path to becoming a dancer -- knowing someone who dances. Yes, as the stereotype has it, there are dancers who were born into alcoholic and/or drug-addicted families, were sexually abused, or pushed into dance to support a boyfriend's drug habit, and who have little education and few occupational skills. But they are a minority.

Dancers mostly work in exotic dance clubs that have evolved since the mid-twentieth century when burlesque lost its popularity. The remaining clubs were referred to as "varicose alley" because they featured has-been burlesque performers, often lacking a full set of teeth and dancing to jukeboxes in sleazy joints and carnival tents. There were "titty bars" and bars with such names as Pink Pussy. Some "strip joints" were considered to have attracted criminals, gamblers, and other disreputable nighttime denizens. Beautiful women found more respectable stages.

In 1973 Michael J. Peter, who earned an MA at Cornell University's School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration and a BS in Business Administration from Syracuse University, came on the scene. Recognized as the founder of the contemporary gentlemen's club, Peter liked the Las Vegas showgirls' style of entertainment but felt that people yearned for human contact in the era of computerization. So he encouraged the popular, palpable interaction between dancer and patron. For a little while, dancer and patron can act as if they are connected, and connection, more than sex, he argued, is what is missing in our increasingly impersonal society. Everything and anything sexual is virtually available on the internet, yet clubs are attractive because they offer live multisensory interactions with attractive women.

The 1980s saw the beginning of clubs run by business people and operated with best practices and ethical standards. Before, according to Robert Watters, the industry had been dominated by thugs -- biker gangs rife with criminal activity. Watters opened the first Rick's Cabaret in Houston, Texas, in 1983, and the chain has since grown to twenty-two clubs. Today, clubs run the gamut from the neighborhood bar and dives with one or more dancers to the upscale-type club -- larger, bureaucratized with hierarchical organization, and typified by specific written rules, quantifiable tasks, and consistency (Spivey 2003). There are low end clubs (Price-Glynn 2010), the "greasy spoons," and the "four-star gourmet" establishments where I have had excellent food as well as watched beautiful dancers. Of course, as in any business there are "rotten apples," but the industry does not have more problems than any other place of public assembly. It is important to compare exotic dance clubs with other types of establishments. Don Waitt, publisher of *Exotic Dancer Magazine*, views strip clubs as a classic piece of Americana: Norman Rockwell in a pair of Lucite heels (Feur 2010).

As the body sounding off in time, space, and with effort and feeling, exotic dance "speech"

attracts live spectator attention. The choreography draws upon everyday life and includes movements simulating cultural rhythms of lovemaking, from flirting and foreplay to intercourse. After all, exotic dance is supposed to be "naughty." Meaning in exotic dance lies in modest and immodest body disclosure; natural, deodorized, and odorized alluring scent; proximity between dancer and patron; the touch of self-delineation; dancer-to-patron touch; and the *pas de deux* of the dancer's flesh and personality with the patron's gaze and fantasy. A patron "ocularly penetrates" a dancer. Her improvisation attempts to trigger in a patron's mind an elaborate story or fleeting thought of, for example, some romance, sex, or dominance-submissive identity. Merely ogling the beauty of the kinetic body or just talking with a dancer may suffice for a patron.

Exotic dance has given rise to its own special imprint of "eye candy" movements that highlight the breasts, buttocks, and hips in addition to the genitals. "I accentuate certain parts of my silhouette," said Helen, an exotic dancer and stockbroker. Exotic dancers' moves derive from belly dance and burlesque and are influenced by African American, jazz, Broadway theatre, music video and hip-hop dance, cheerleading, and gymnastics. In turn, exotic dance influences social and theatre dance forms (Hanna 2012). Thongs, the skimpy covering of buttocks and genitals seen on public beaches, were first worn by strippers, as were high-heeled platform shoes. Specific moves associated with exotic dance have become *de rigueur* on MTV (Music Television), in social booty dancing, and in strip aerobics or pole dancing in gyms.

Because exotic dance is more than displaying and cupping body parts, I illustrate the genre of dance and theatre available to live spectators. I offer a palette of exotic dance moves that I have observed, not all performed by any particular dancer or in any specific club. Dancers create movement sequences drawing upon some of the dance vocabulary and accoutrements listed below depending upon their creative skill, club, and government restrictions on aesthetic expression.

Locomotion (movement from place to place; 4-inch heels are restraining):

- strut (sexy mincing or stalking walk, leading with pelvis)

- walk

- turn

- slide to floor

- crawl predator-like

- from kneeling position, move knees outward and inward

- on right knee, place left foot on floor, then step up on right

- jump

- leap

- split

- jump and land in split

- cartwheel

- somersault frontward or backward into a split

- slide feet back from mirror with hands touching it

- walk, brushing one foot in front of the other

- pole work (at base):

 - twirl around own axis while circling the pole

 - place back to pole and extend right leg

 - hands move up side of torso

 - handstand with legs touching pole and slide body to floor in split

 - squat with back against pole

 - sit straddling pole, arch torso backward, unfasten hair tie to let hair flow with movement

 - hold onto the pole with one hand and twirl around it

 - bend backward, one leg bent at knee

 - thrust buttocks outward, slap one buttock

 - walk to pole, hook leg and twirl around pole, toss head back, shake hair

- pole work (on pole):

 - lean against pole, shimmy up with hands, fling body outward, and then legs grab pole

 - shimmy up pole

 - turn upside down, holding on with thighs, bounce buttocks sliding down

 - shimmy up pole, split legs outward, extend arms outward as thighs grip pole

- turn around pole, grab it and shimmy up, right leg extended outward
 - lean back, straighten up
 - lean back with legs outward horizontally, bring them up to chest
- turn upside down holding with one leg hooked around pole, the other in bent shape
 - spin holding with legs, torso bent back, brush hair
 - hold with hands, split upside down, legs vertical and together grasp pole, arms extend
- move body toward and away from pole
- lean back, holding with one or both hands
- flip one leg up in arc, followed by the other
- bicycle legs
 - extend legs in split perpendicular to floor, holding pole with one or both hands
 - hang upside down by one leg, the other leg and arms out to sides
 - hook right leg around pole as support to twirl around pole
 - hold pole with right hand as support to twirl around pole, right thigh lifted
- turn body upside down, open legs straight or bent
- turn upside down and slide down in split
- lower self onto both knees and descend into split
- slide down pole to one shoulder

Gesture:

self-touch:

- move hands over body creating curvilinear designs
- run hand up extended leg
- move hands from between the breasts up the neck and over the face
- brush stomach, breasts, inner and outer thighs, genitals, buttocks
- press breasts together
- toss hair back with hand
- toss hair by rotating head
- pull hair on head
- spank buttocks
- spin on buttocks
- spread buttocks apart
- lick fingers
- flash (lower G-string to expose pubic area)
- open legs to reveal vagina ("spread show," "go pink," "pink blossom shot," "spread eagle," "the big bird," "bloomin," "pink bouquet," "money spread shot")

pose, preen

rotate head with loose hair

facial choreography:

- make eye contact
- move eyes (glance sideways, half close eyes, wink, bat eyelashes) to engage a customer with expectation of tip or sale of dance)
- raise eyebrows
- smile
- pout
- stick out tongue
- lick lips

gyrate hips and torso

thrust hip back and forward and rotate hips ("bump and grind")

rotate hips into a squat (like a screw)

undulate body or body parts

shimmy breasts

bend torso parallel to ground

bend torso to peek through legs

on knees, bend back over rail

on patron's lap, bend back and up (wheelbarrow)

shake buttocks

thrust buttocks toward spectator

thrust pelvis toward spectator

quiver and tremble the body

snake arms upward

arms circle body
 pull G-string
 move palms on mirror
 raise arms overhead and push breasts into mirror
 rotate knees toward and away from each other ("butterfly")
 kneeling, hinge torso backward
 standing or prone, bend leg back from knee
 bend backward with hands and toes on floor (backbend) or from knees
 resting body on back of shoulders, extend legs up wall
 hold foot and extend leg full length
 swing leg over patron's head
 circle leg
 hold foot and extend leg full length
 extend leg out to patron's shoulder to make garter accessible for the patron to place tips
 stand and arch torso backward
 stand with torso bent over perpendicular to floor and extend one leg and both arms out to side
 sit with torso bent over parallel to floor, extend one leg out to side, bend the other leg with knee on ground to the
 other side and foot toward center of body
 breathe heavily
 lie prone on floor, spread and close extended legs
 lie prone on floor, raise buttocks up and down
 on hands and knees, vibrate the buttocks
 on all fours, undulate the torso
 pretend to be caged
 supine on floor, arch torso
 supine on shoulders, extend leg and wiggle and rotate foot
 supine on floor, open and close extended legs
 supine on floor, hook legs behind head
 squat with knees turned outward
 contract genital muscles ("wink vulva")
 bend back over tip rail from a kneeling position
 hump rail
 stand on rail
 stand on hands with legs in a split
 stand on head with legs in a split
 remove heels and dance
 collect tips with breast
 mouth song
 touch patron:
 swish hair over patron's head
 brush patron's hair with hand
 balance with hands on patron's shoulders, thighs, or knees while arching backward or otherwise moving
 precariously
 kiss patron's cheek or forehead
 hold patron's hand
 "pecker check"(brush head over patron's crotch)
 place buttocks in patron's lap
 straddle patron
 grind or friction body against patron's body
 place legs around patron's neck

Level:

stand in pose
 kneel
 hang on a pole near ceiling
 "floor work" (moving on hands and knees or back or stomach) refers to childlike behavior, sexuality, transgressive
 female sex role

Place:

stage
 runway
 table ("table dancing" for a fee; on floor near the patron's table, dancer's legs often between the legs of the seated

customer; on a pedestal near the table, on the table)
lap ("lap dancing" for a fee; patron sits on chair and dancer gyrates, flips head, arches back)
couch (same as lap dance but patron sits on couch)
shower

Costume and make-up:

creates stage identity
color is significant (red suggests passion; white suggests purity and virginity; black suggests nighttime and sultry female)

Exposure:

striptease (taking off one's clothes in a suggestive and seductive manner; commonly worn are a short dress, gown, robe, strip pants with front and back panels, gauntlets [elbow-~~F~~^{3/4}-length gloves], beaded bra with optional tassels, pasties, G-string or T-bar, underpants, jewelry, hose, very high heels)
go topless
flash (lower G-string to expose pubic area)
go bottomless
spread show (open legs to reveal vagina, "go pink")
spread buttocks to reveal vagina and anus

Props and Acts:

fan dance (used to circumvent New York's nudity laws: it was illegal to be nude while moving, but not standing; ballerina Sally Rand used a fan because she could not afford a costume)
tassels (fastened to pasties [areola breast covering] and twirled, sometimes in opposite directions)
boa (several feet-long scarf of feathers, fur, or delicate fabric; dancer or patron use tip to stroke the other's body)
"Eve" act with boa constrictor
imaginary lover
audience member brought on stage to dress in sultan turban and taught the "belly dance"
trained bird removes clothes from stripper and carries them away
whipped cream and chocolate put on and taken off body
pole (silent dance and sex partner, prop for performance to display different parts of the body)
gloves (play invokes penis, fellatio)

Actual Spectators

The real live strip club spectators are patrons who visit a club for an immediate erotic, multisensory, aesthetic, and social experience. (Scott 1996, Wood 2000, Frank 2002, Liepe-Levinson 2002, Barton 2006, and Egan 2006 are among the researchers who also found a diversity of patrons and patron motivation.) These spectators interact with the performers in a mutual nonverbal and verbal exchange as dancers perform for tips and private dance fees. Many spectators are repeat patrons. They keep the business alive, which contributes to government tax revenue. Exotic dance spectators are part of a culture of empathy with sexual expression in the public domain.

At the macro-subjective level, some real spectators -- youth, workers, businesspersons, and professionals -- seek entertainment, adult play, and the pleasure of seeing a female dancing creatively with self-confidence in her own beauty. Variety, excitement of a transgressive and foreign adventure, and an opportunity to relax are other magnets. Expeditions to exotic dance clubs may be nothing more than quests toward the unknown. Like tourists, some men visit clubs as they would visit art galleries and museums featuring nudes expecting to see the revelation of yet another woman's sexual being. Curiosity is often a draw; lovemaking sometimes occurs clothed in the missionary position in the dark, so there are men who have never seen the full nude female body. They may seek the sight of what a wife or girlfriend does not provide. Patrons may seek refuge from real relationships and create their own sexual scripts; it's safe sex. Moreover, patrons can avoid workplace political correctness about sexuality. Some patrons show support for women's sexual liberation and empowerment. Not surprisingly, patrons may seek an assignation, although there are other venues for prostitution. A second group of real spectators consists of clusters of men celebrating an occasion such as a bachelor party.

A third group of spectators are men trying to cope with problems. Some patrons suffer impotency, performance anxiety, and/or substance abuse. Lonely or unhappy men seek an "understanding" nonjudgmental and emotionally supportive listener. Patrons can get attention from

attractive women and escape from stress, avoid rejection, and fantasize about being desired. Married men may go to clubs to get excited the better to perform their marital sex role.

Clubs attract a fourth group of patrons. Macho men seek male identity, bonding, and dominance through fantasy. These spectators display social privilege and control of women by spending ostentatiously, "making it rain" (tossing dollar bills up in the air which dancers pick up as the money falls), and otherwise dispensing tips and fees to dancers. Feeling manly, a spectator can have a fantasy relationship that avoids the risk of failure and the work required to develop a real relationship. A patron also can feel superior to women by being clothed.

Increasingly women are going to exotic dance clubs with husbands or boyfriends for entertainment and appreciation of female dancers as art in motion. Lesbians may frequent clubs. Some women are checking out a club to see if they would like to work there.

Absent Spectators and their Actions

Dolan (1988:121) reminds us of the varied responses of spectators across ideology of gender, sexuality, race, and class. In the United States there is yet another kind of spectator, a fantastical audience that imagines through its own feminist, limited knowledge, and/or religious lens what exotic dance is and what it leads to. By contrast with the supportive live spectators at strip clubs, there are people who just don't know the literature and are influenced by myths about exotic dance. Thus a group of feminists and the uninformed, for different reasons, ally themselves with religious groups in opposition to exotic dance. At the macro-subjective level, the Christian Right follows Biblical injunctions concerning the use of the body. According to its scriptural interpretation, exotic dance is sinful, immodest, a secular challenge to Christianity, and an undermining of patriarchy. A segment of the Christian Right, the most adversarial imaginary spectator group wants their values to prevail throughout the United States and elsewhere where they proselytize. These religion-driven people take action against the exotic club industry hoping to eliminate the separation of church and state and create a theocratic nation.

For the Christian Right the "ungodly" exotic dance clubs destroy femininity and undermine men because they draw women out of the home and into "demimonde" employment. Dancers are considered prostitutes and drug addicts who compete with married women for men's attention and admiration, challenging the married women's self-esteem. Furthermore, the dancers compete with men economically, challenging their sense of masculinity. Thus the outrage when a "passive," "modest" woman steps out of the domestic realm into the public arena where she shamelessly removes her clothing and dances her nude, or semi-nude, body for sexual fantasy, commercial purpose, and economic independence. The existence of the exotic dancer signals the males' insufficient surveillance and weakened masculinity (only the husband should see the woman's nude body).

Plenty of Christian Right literature addresses the problem of men's lust. Popular author Tim LaHaye (1963) argues that men have an uncontrollable nature due to their "constant production of sperm and seminal fluid." The male sex drive is "almost volcanic in its latent ability to erupt at the slightest provocation." Women are "candles among gunpowder" and must dress so as not to "blow up the fire of men's lust" (see also Cloud 2007).

Because sexuality outside of marriage is threatening, the Christian Right has "prudential" lifestyle rules that interdict behaviors believed to lead a person to perdition, e.g., being tempted by adult cabarets. The notion is that after the fall, humans were left with a powerful sinful nature, so prudent Christians must keep themselves from drifting astray.

A segment of the politically active Christian Right works toward state control over personal sexuality as a key to what they believe will create a salutary environment for children and make way for their ideal state. Under most people's radar, exotic dance is merely one of their targets. It is vulnerable because of the negative stereotypes perpetuated by the media and the concomitant stigma. Consequently, these imaginary spectators fight adult entertainment by harnessing an organizational network fueled by technology, money, lawyers, public relations outfits, and "researchers." Following

Psalm 127, they emphasize militaristic imagery about the use of violence against God's enemies. Christians' task is to recruit soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ. Clergy speak of themselves as generals or admirals and their evangelist followers as soldiers, powerful warriors. Children are their parents' arrows, to go out against the enemy. Marty Klein in *America's War on Sex* (2006) describes other Christian Right targets.

At the macro-objective level, the First Amendment protects the separation of church and state and exotic dance as expression -- thus preventing its banning. However, the U.S. Supreme Court held that governments could regulate clubs if the aim is to prevent crime, property depreciation, and sexually transmitted disease -- the legal doctrine of "adverse secondary effects." Recent court cases call for evidence specific to a locality to justify strip club regulation, not old "studies" related to other times and places. The Supreme Court said in *City of Los Angeles v. Alameda Books* (2002) that for localities to justify a law (its legislative predicate, preamble, or recital of finding), they should have evidence related to their own communities and show that the merit of that evidence can be contested in court.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of social science evidence, a segment of the politically active Christian Right unstintingly publicizes through its media empires and nearly 500 ordinances and litigation that challenges these laws the myth that exotic dance causes adverse secondary effects (Hanna 2012). The myth is fantasy or a subterfuge for morality. Much telling makes the alleged problems a "verity," because most people through lack of knowledge and the negative presentation of exotic dance in the media, films, and TV are unaware of what exotic dance is. Christian Right adversaries of exotic dance summon public outrage and support from some feminists and uninformed people to pass adult cabaret restrictions to drive them out of business. As a result the public inadvertently supports a religious group's efforts to break down the walls separating church and state. The striptease imaginary Christian Right spectators lobby local governments across the nation.

Recently the State of Ohio, pushed by Phil Burress and his Citizens for Community Values operation, passed draconian regulations that have caused clubs to close. Members of the Christian Right burrow into government as "holy hires" or get elected so they can legislate and adjudicate against exotic dance. In addition, the Christian Right has attorneys who solicit governments to hire them to draft and defend restrictive laws. Most prominent is Scott Bergthold, who goes from city, county, and state to sell his model anti-exotic dance ordinances. He has been likened to an old-time snake oil salesman riding the circuit. Knoxville City Council member Joe Bailey remarked, "To me, it seems like he's just a franchisee and goes around from city to city and sells these laws and municipalities pass them, and then we hire him to represent the city at \$200 per hour" (quoted in *ACE National Newsletter* March 14, 2006). I have seen Bergthold in courtrooms everywhere reading from a hymnal of spin that clubs cause adverse secondary effects as he tries to defend challenged regulations he drafted to destroy the adult hospitality business (see Westlaw listing of cases he argued). Double dipping?

Active Christian Right imaginary spectators use the coercive power of local and state government against exotic dance. Under the zoning and land use powers, governments can restrict club licensing and the distance a club must be situated from schools, churches, and other clubs. Governments may even take club land under eminent domain or purchase a club to eliminate it. In further ways of discriminating against exotic dance clubs, governments determine the operation of clubs by specifying hours of opening, lighting, configuration of the stage and seating, and the exterior signage. "Sin" taxes include fees for licensing of dancers and staff, a tax on patrons, and a tax on percent of club income.

Regulation of dancer/patron expression is a further way to eliminate exotic dance. Laws may specify body parts to be covered, restrict dance style and movement assumed to be "simulated sex," set distances between dancers as well as dancers and patrons, and prohibit touch. Here is probably the first full description of part of what should not show.

The area at the rear of the human body (sometimes referred to as the gluteus maximus) which lies between two

imaginary straight lines running parallel to the ground when a person is standing, the first or top such line being $\frac{1}{2}$ inch below the top of the vertical cleavage of the nates (i.e., the prominence formed by the muscles running from the back of the hip to the back of the leg) and the second or bottom such line being $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the lowest point of the curvature of the fleshy protuberance (sometimes referred to as the gluteal fold), and between two imaginary straight lines, one on each side of the body (the "outside lines"), which outside lines are perpendicular to the ground and to the horizontal lines described above and which perpendicular outside lines pass through the outermost point(s) at which each nate meets the other side of each leg. Notwithstanding the above, buttocks shall not include the leg, the hamstring muscle below the gluteal fold, the tensor fasciae latae muscle or any of the above-described portion of the human body that is between either: (i) the left inside perpendicular line and the left outside perpendicular line, or (ii) the right inside perpendicular line and the right outside perpendicular line. For the purpose of the previous sentence the left inside perpendicular line shall be an imaginary straight line on the left side of the anus: (i) that is perpendicular to the ground and to the horizontal lines described above, (ii) that is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the distance from the anus to the left outside line, and the right inside perpendicular line shall be an imaginary straight line on the right side of the anus, (i) this is perpendicular to the ground and to the horizontal lines described above, and (ii) that is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the distance from the anus to the right outside line. (The above description can generally be described as covering $\frac{1}{3}$ of the buttocks centered over the cleavage for the length of the cleavage.²)

Legal maneuvers abound: governments change rules if clubs comply with a law and thrive, withdraw a contested ordinance if it is going to lose in litigation and have to pay club legal fees, and require a religious group to put up money in the event the ordinance it wants passed leads to a lawsuit. Governments further harass clubs by repeatedly authorizing inspectors to find fire, health, etc. violations, raiding clubs, and even citing patrons for jay-walking. Over a ten year period, Prince George's County, Maryland, attacked clubs in such ways until in a lawsuit favoring the clubs, Judge Marvin J. Garbis (U.S. District Court, Baltimore) put an end to such hostility. He ruled the county's regulations unconstitutional (*Wet Sands, Inc., et al. v. Prince George's County, MD*, 2007).

Some fantasy spectators also engage in "street" tactics. They picket clubs, distribute anti-club literature, block club entrances, photograph patrons' auto license plates to get patrons' names to post on the internet. Furthermore they call these patrons' families and workplaces to tell them that these men were at strip clubs and need counseling. Imaginary spectators have even vandalized clubs. In Florida, in 2006, some City of Flager Beach families posted on its website: "We NEED YOUR HELP! Picketing is important because it shows visible opposition to exotic dance clubs." Anti-Semitic comments about Cristina club owners also appeared on the website. The organization sent parents living within three blocks of the club a letter alerting them to the opening of the club and made negative allegations against the club owners and their wives. As a result the club owners' children were harassed in school. Seeking to oust exotic dance clubs from Kennedale, Texas, in 2004, Pastor Jim Norwood of the Oakcrest Family Church and members of his congregation sent postcards to customers of Fantasy Foxx Club. Each postcard featured a photo of the customer's car parked outside the club with the text, "Observed you in the neighborhood." In upstate New York, a couple who owned a club under bombardment by the Christian Right sent their daughter to live with relatives after threats to her life (*New York State v. Langer*, 1998). The activist Christian Right fantasy spectators attempt to strip the First (freedom of expression/separation of church and state), Fifth (due process), and Fourteenth (equal opportunity) Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, corset the exotic dancer, micromanage businesses, and assault women by dismantling a club industry through local and state government actions. I could go on and on about the Christian Right steamroller, but I think you get the idea.

Not surprisingly, some politicians of any religious persuasion use adult cabarets as a red herring to divert attention from government failure to cope with the real problems of education, crime, health, and traffic. In this way, the politicians show their constituents that they are working on their behalf to merit being returned to office. Politicians often prey upon and reinforce stereotypes about adult cabarets and attack the exotic dance industry -- even if their jurisdiction does not have a club! In Maryland, Prince George's County executive Jack Johnson and county council focused on trying to destroy adult entertainment while they had not dealt with a high rate of well-documented crimes involving personal injury or death and a decline in the broad public perception of the quality

of life. And then on May 17, 2011, Johnson pleaded guilty to two felony charges; he admitted in court that he took more than \$400,000 in bribes during his eight years as county executive!

Defense Against Absent Spectator Attack

Exotic dancers often join with other free speech advocates, exotic dance consumers, and involved businesses (clubs, beverage providers, architects, etc.) in the fight to preserve free expression, most effectively through club organizations pooling resources. Resistance is an unending marathon, not a sprint. Adult cabarets will continually be facing Christian Right adversaries as well as taxes!

Clubs must be on the defensive. The costs of club pro-action -- e.g., preventing legislation from surfacing -- is far less costly than challenging laws in court. The Ohio statewide Buckeye Association of Club Executives' battle is said to have cost around \$4 million to date. Clubs have successfully put pro-exotic dance propositions on state and local government ballots and won, e.g., in Seattle, Washington, and Scottsdale, Arizona.

Every weekend for four years imaginary exotic dance spectators who belong to New Beginnings Ministries church were attacking the Foxhole club in Coshocton County, Ohio, with street tactics. Fed up, the owner in 2010 finally accepted the pastor's invitation to come to his church. In a counter protest, wearing see-through shorts or bikinis and belly rings, and toting Super Soakers (water guns), the dancers parked themselves outside the church. A stripper explained, "Our hearts are with Jesus, but our bodies are at the Foxhole."

At the micro-subjective level, some individual imaginary spectators in the politically active Christian Right are often dealing with their own personal demons, and therefore fight against the clubs to eliminate temptation. Hypocrisy and forgiveness are rampant. By contrast, actual spectator supporters of exotic dance have various purposes for attending clubs as noted earlier. Within both groups, individuals may see themselves as leaders in founding organizations and developing strategies in the culture war.

Actual spectators experience multisensory play, complexity, empathy, openness, empiricism, and attentiveness. By contrast, fictional spectators experience sin, simplicity, antipathy, imagination, attribution, and inattentiveness. At the macro-subjective level, the active Christian Right imaginary spectators believe in the inerrant Word of God and act against dance in their pursuit of supplanting constitutional democracy with a bible-based theocracy. These spectators are blind and deaf to the actual language of a dance form they believe to be sinful or to cause negative effects. Their actions set the genre back years. Actual spectators value free expression in entertainment and free enterprise in business. They expect to see full nudity and sexy dance movements as seen in "high" "elite" art -- ballet, opera, modern dance, and theatre -- certainly more skin that is shown in skimpy Music TV or swimming venues. Patrons who actually frequent exotic dance clubs expect them to have nightclub hours. Unmet expectations deter patronization of the dancers, hurting the industry, causing lost jobs, and diminishing government tax revenue.

The interplay of real spectators inside the club engaged in fantasy with actual dancers and imaginary spectators who do not go to the clubs but engage in fantasy about patrons and dancers is combustible. Conflagration leads to economic harm, censorship (Bennett 1997:109-110), street "violence," legislation, and litigation. Following Reitzer's model, at each level of analysis there is a clash, a bifurcation of attack and defense.

AUDIENCES IMPACT EXOTIC DANCE

Live Spectators

Engage in fantasy with real dancers

Imaginary Spectators

Engage in fantasy about patrons & dancers

**Interplay of Audiences: Combustible -- Potential for
harming industry
censorship
street violence, legislation
litigation**

39

Exotic dance can be seen as a lens through which to view the culture war in the United States. The implications of the imaginary spectators' assault on one aspect of American culture through government are threatening. Professor and attorney Nadine Strossen (1995) points out:

Once we cede to the government the power to violate one right for one person, or group, then no right is safe for any person or group. So when we defend sexual expression, we are really making a stand not only against a specific kind of censorship...but human rights in general.

Bibliography

- ACE (Association of Club Executives) of California Newsletter*. 2008. "AB 2914: Fighting the Proposed State Adult Business Tax." June 4.
- Allen, Robert Clyde. 1991. *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.
- Balmer, Randall. 2006. *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America: An Evangelical's Lament*. New York: Perseus Books.
- Barton, Bernadette. 2006. *Stripped: Inside the Lives of Exotic Dancers*. New York: New York University Press. Bennett, Susan. 1997. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Cloud, David. 2007. "Survey of Christian Men on the Subject of Women's Clothing," Port Huron, MI: Fundamental Baptist Information Service, May 1 (www.wayoflife.org, August 6, 2008).
- Dolan, Jill. 1988. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.
- Domke, David, and Kevin Coe. 2008. *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Egan, R. Danielle. 2006. *Dancing for Dollars and Paying for Love: The Relationships between Exotic Dancers and Their Regulars*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Feur, Alan. 2010. "Sex Business Backs the Party Animal." *New York Times Week in Review*, April 4.
- Frank, Katherine. 2002. *G-Strings and Sympathy: Strip Club Regulars and Male Desire*. Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hanna, Judith Lynne. 1983. *The Performer-Audience Connection: Emotion to Metaphor in Dance and Society*. Austin and London: University of Texas Press.
- 1987a. "Dance and Religion (Overview)," in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. 4. New York: Macmillan Co., pp. 203-212.
- 1987b. *To Dance Is Human: A Theory of Nonverbal Communication*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 1988a. "The Representation and Reality of Divinity in Dance," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56(2):501-526.
- 1988b. *Dance, Sex, and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 1998. "Undressing the First Amendment and Corseting the Striptease Dancer," *The Drama Review* (T158) 42(2):38-69, Summer.
- 1999. "Toying with the Striptease Dancer and the First Amendment," in Stuart Reifel, ed., *Play and Culture Studies*, Vol. 2. Greenwich, CT., Ablex, pp. 37-55.

- 2002. "Dance Under the Censorship Watch," *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society* 29(1):1-13.
- 2003a. "Exotic Dance Adult Entertainment: Ethnography Challenges False Mythology," *City and Society* 15(2):165-193.
- 2004. "The First Amendment, Artistic Merit and Nudity in Minnesota: Dance, Criminal Public Indecency and Evidence," *Minnesota Law and Politics Web Magazine*, April/May (noted in *Minnesota Law and Politics* 145:34), www.lawandpolitics.com .
- 2005a. "Dance and Religion (Overview)," in Lindsay Jones, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2nd edition. New York: Macmillan Co., pp. 2134-2143.
- 2005b. "Adult Entertainment Exotic Dance: A Guide for Planners and Policy Makers" (CPL [Council of Planning Librarians] Bibliography 375), *Journal of Planning Literature* 20(2):116-134.
- 2010a. "'Toxic' Strip Clubs: The Intersection of Religion, Law and Fantasy," *Theology and Sexuality* 16(1):19-58.
- 2010b. "Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves," *The Journal of Sex Research* (publication of the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality) 47:1-30.
- 2012a. "Empowerment: The Art of Seduction in Adult Entertainment Exotic Dance," in Frank Kouwenhoven and James Kippen, eds. *Music and the Art of Seduction*. Delft, The Netherlands: Eburon Academic Publishers.
- 2012b. *Naked Truth: Strip Clubs, Democracy and a Christian Right*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Klein, Marty. 2006. *America's War on Sex*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- La Haye, Tim. 1963. *How to Be Happy Though Married*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.
- Liepe-Levinson, Katherine. 2002. *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire*. New York: Routledge.
- McConachie, Bruce. 2008. *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Price-Glynn, Kim. 2010. *Strip Club: Gender, Power, and Sex Work*. NY: New York University Press.
- Scott, David A. 1996. *Behind The G-String: An Exploration of the Stripper's Image, Her Person, Her Meaning*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.
- Spivey, Sue E. (2003. "Bureaucratizing the Erotic: Rationalizing Embodiment in Two Nude Dancing Bars." *Sociological Imagination* 39(2): 93–113.
- Strossen, Nadine. 1995. *Defending Pornography Free: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights*. New York: Scribners.

Wood, Elizabeth Anne. 2000. "Working in the Fantasy Factory: The Attention Hypothesis and the Enacting of Masculine Power in Strip Clubs." Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 29(1): 5–31.

² <http://www.clk.co.st-johns.fl.us/minrec/ordinancebooks/1992/ORD1992-12.pdf>;
Café 707 v. St. Johns County, 11th Circuit 1993.