

SEXUAL ALIENATION AND THE CASH NEXUS: THE WORLD  
OF A TOPLESS DANCER

A Thesis

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Sociology

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in  
Sociology

by

Clare C. Giesen

December, 1974

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on three and one half years of participant observation research conducted while employed as a topless dancer at Rembrandt's Paint Factory in Houston, Texas. A descriptive study is given of topless clubs, topless dancers, and customers who frequent topless clubs.

Further, an analysis is made of Sexual Alienation and the Cash Nexus that exists within the club. This manifests itself through mutual exploitation between the customers and the topless dancers. This alienation is found within the social and economic structure of the overall society.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, a new entertainment phenomenon known as topless clubs became very much a part of the contemporary culture of the United States. Topless Clubs are nightclubs where the patrons are entertained by women dancing to current rock music on a small stage clothed only in bikini bottoms. In most topless clubs, the dancers also serve as waitresses. The topless scene emerged from the climate of social change in the sixties wherein old moral and sexual values were seriously challenged by many, but especially the youth. As a social change, it is critical for social scientists to study the phenomenon of topless dancing. The value of sociology should be that it is capable of objective analysis of change in the contemporary world.

However, the typical response of sociologists to toplessness and topless clubs is to treat them as a social pathology, a sick facet of American society that constitutes data for the sociology of deviance. It is the purpose of this paper, not to treat topless clubs as a social pathology, but as a product of the larger social structure. There may be something pathological about the social structure which has created a need for a challenge to old sexual and moral values and hence the emergence of topless clubs. A common practice of sociologists is to take the social structure, the standards of society, call these standards "norms" and accept them "normal" or correct. George Homans in his book, The Human Group defines a norm as "the expected behavior of a number of men;"<sup>1</sup> therefore, behavior that violates these group norms is labeled deviant behavior. While norms may be held as standards of society, the sociologist should not stop there; a sociologist

should examine and analyze the entire social structure.

According to C. W. Mills:

If the norms were examined, the investigator would perhaps be carried to see total structure of norms and to relate these to distributions of power. Such a structural point of sight is not usually achieved. The level of abstraction does not rise to permit examination of these normative structures themselves or of why they come to be transgressed or of their political implications. 2

Sociologists have used the terms, Social Disorder or Social Disorganization to refer to transgression of norms. To quote Mills "The basis of 'stability' 'order' or 'solidarity' is not typically analyzed. . .but a conception of such a basis is implicitly used and sanctioned for some normative conception of a socially 'healthy' stable organization in the determination of pathological conditions. . . .It may be proposed that the norms in terms of which pathological conditions are detected are humanitarian ideals. But we must then ask for the social orientation of such ideals."<sup>3</sup> Social Order and normative structure make way for sociologists to deal with deviations from society in terms of adjustment, adaptation and their opposites. These terms adaptation and maladaptation imply a normal. While normal is usually tacitly understood by most people it is extremely difficult to define in concrete terms. Normal means that which is in harmony with the general makeup and organization of the object under consideration, that which is consistent with other normal factors. A sociologist's task should be to abstract from this concept to uncover the social content or social implication of what society sees as normal. Often, normal is used as propaganda for conformity to norms and traits of a larger system which thrives on the middle class milieu of values. Examination of normative structures may imply taking a stand for some sociologists. While many

sociologists operate under the guise of reforming society, such a stand may involve making a statement involving the politics of the larger social structure. It is often more convenient for the sociologists to study any variation from the structure as deviation or pathology.

"This mode of problemazation shifts the responsibility of taking a stand from the thinker and gives a democratic rationale for his work."<sup>4</sup>

#### Biography of Topless Dancing

The first public topless dance was performed by Carol Doda at the El Condor Club in San Francisco, California, on July 14, 1964. It was earlier in the season that Rudi Gernreich, the fashion designer, introduced the first one piece bikini--no top--to the fashion world. At that time Go Go Clubs were very popular. They were according to Carey, Sharp and Peterson, "One of the by-products of the twist craze and the autoerotic dance style of the 60's."<sup>5</sup> The El Condor Club, on the corner of Columbus and Broadway in San Francisco, was such a club. Davey Rosenberg, a regular customer of the El Condor Club, was the initiator of topless dancing. He went to Joseph Magnins, purchased a topless bathing suit, and brought it to the El Condor. Carol Doda, a waitress and go go dancer at the club wore it, and became the first topless dancer. "And so on the corner of Columbus Avenue and Broadway, the mores of American entertainment were abruptly altered and 'topless' became a national phenomenon."<sup>6</sup> According to Davey, he put the word topless in the dictionary. Through various gimmicks, Davey Rosenberg promoted topless entertainment in San Francisco, and it has subsequently spread throughout the United States. Mostly topless clubs are found in large urban areas. Depending on the type of club, they



cater to all manner of clientele. Ames, Brown, and Weiner saw the topless phenomenon as significant because ". . . It emerged as a part of the moral liberalization that took place in the United States in the middle 1960's. Not only was private sex behavior reported to be undergoing changes, but public toleration of sex also became more liberal, and as it did, certain forms of sex display became more public. One of the most controversial activities in this sequence of liberalization was the emergence of the topless barmaid."<sup>7</sup> Another significant aspect of topless culbs is the economics involved. According to one Houston attorney and club owner, the motivation for establishing a topless club is quite simple; it is an extremely profitable business venture in the short term. "An average club will gross about twenty-five thousand to thirty thousand dollars per month, with expenses at twelve thousand to fifteen thousand dollars per month, leaving a net of ten thousand to eighteen thousand dollars. These figures must be tempered by the knowledge that the average life of one of these clubs is three years."<sup>6</sup> Toplessness has its advantages for the girls as well as the owners. If a girl works five nights a week, her wages will run between two hundred and two hundred and fifty dollars a week. The average work span for the topless dancers is six months to a year.

It is important to note that although both topless dancing and stripping are forms of public nudity, there is a significant difference between the two. Stripping as entertainment is more carnal, more sensuous, more erotic. Topless dancing is just what it says--dancing, usually to the latest dance styles, bare-breasted. Also strip clubs are far more blatant about extracting cash from the customers. According to Carla Frerking, longtime manager of topless clubs, "In Houston,

hustling champagne for ten to fifty dollars a fifth, is universal among strip clubs, while this is an infrequent practice in the topless clubs."<sup>9</sup> She also goes on to say that "stripping has been around forever and people now view it as a clip joint featuring the same old bumps and grinds, while topless clubs are not so pushy about money and people see these clubs as somehow cleaner."<sup>10</sup> Topless clubs are a product of the times--with the new public emphasis placed on sex. They are cute, gimmicky, and they caught on. They are still, ten years later, a popular form of entertainment. Davey Rosenberg's philosophy about topless clubs is that "it gives the people something to talk about when they get home to Montana."<sup>11</sup>

#### Statement of Procedure

The author of this paper has worked in topless clubs for three years and eight months. For the majority of the time she worked at one club, Rembrandt's Paint Factory. However, for a period of six months, she worked at two other clubs. The experience of the author is unusual in sociological research, in that for the first nine months, her sole occupation was that of a topless dancer. Therefore, she had the personal experience of commitment to topless dancing as a profession and taking it seriously as a means of livelihood.

In order to make a sociological analysis of topless clubs impersonal and also to give a historical perspective, the author feels it necessary to give a brief personal background of her experience as a topless dancer. The author graduated from college with a B.A. degree in Sociology in 1970. In 1970, counterculture philosophy was at its peak, and the feminist movement was in its genesis. The author was

subject to influence by the counterculture and feminist stirring. The job market for females was somewhat restricted, and after a brief experience as a secretary in the straight world, she opted for counterculture philosophy and dropped out, in a sense, from the straight world. She decided, on happenstance, to be a topless dancer, and for a period of time took it seriously. Her experience as a topless dancer was somewhat unique in that she held a bachelors degree in Sociology.

Although she was a fully committed participant in the club, her background as a sociologist made participation more fascinating. The author made observations about the interactions, the psychology and events of the club. It was in part this new experience that spawned her interest in furthering her studies in sociology. Upon entering graduate school she continued her job as a topless dancer on a part-time basis to finance her way through school. The author became even more interested in topless clubs as a sociological phenomenon. After advanced studies in the areas of social change, social structure, alienation and deviance, the author realized that a sociological analysis of topless clubs included much more than a study of a sexual deviant subculture.

A social scientist should always be aware of over-involvement with his study or becoming too sympathetic to the subjects of study. Because this author was a topless dancer for an extended period of time, objectivity could be problematical. However, in writing this paper, the author was fully cognizant of this threat, and at all times did strive to be as objective as possible. A further argument for the author's objectivity, perhaps, is that this study was one of chance rather than design. As mentioned above, she was already a topless dancer

before she began her thesis on topless dancing. She was merely taking advantage of an excellent opportunity for research. Often sociologists, in order to make a study of a particular group or institution, become participant observers. One danger involved is that the sociologist will "go native" or "incorporate the role into his self conceptions and achieve self expression in the role, [so] that it is almost impossible to report his findings."<sup>12</sup> The author's research is quite valid, in that she went "native" before she began making sociological inquiry.

Another advantage to this particular situation, is that the author needed no disguise to obtain her data as a participant in a topless club. Therefore, any information that was gathered, was obtained in a very real and direct manner. Kai Erickson points out that information obtained through the use of disguise in sociological research clouds the data and ". . .that a wide variety of such interpretations is possible so long as one has no control over the effects introduced by the observer. . .and so long as we remain unable to account for such differences, we cannot know the meaning of the information we collect."<sup>13</sup> In the same vein, Erickson adds that "Sociologists live careers in which they occasionally become patients, occasionally take jobs as steel workers or taxi drivers, and frequently find themselves in social settings where their trained eye begins to look for that purpose."<sup>14</sup> The author was in that particular situation as a member participant in a topless club. Jack Douglas in his book, Observations of Deviance, defines a member participant as someone with "previous involvement in the everyday lives of a group of deviants as a member."<sup>15</sup>

In writing this paper, the author has the inescapable bias of

anyone living in a society. Everyone projects something of herself into whatever she observes, studies, analyzes, etc. Therefore, a scientist, as a human being, will always observe things through his own eyes and bias. The author's only bias may be that, unlike Jack Douglas, she prefers to use the term human beings instead of deviants.

As a member participant, the author had the advantage of obtaining a natural understanding of the interactions in the club. She was an accepted employee of the club and, therefore, had access to all data that was available. There was no systematic routine to her collection of data, she never had formal interviews with either the dancers or the customers. The author felt that a formal interview or questionnaire would only put a barrier between herself and her co-workers and that she might be viewed with mistrust. Informal conversations with the women in the dressing room before, during, and after work, breakfast with the employees after work, and going to afterhours clubs, provided the information she needed. This information she usually recorded later. She did have close relationships with four of the girls she worked with at one time or another and this was invaluable in collecting data for her thesis. These women were cognizant of her thesis topic and she felt free to have in-depth conversations with them to obtain data for her thesis.

The author has observed approximately 150 topless dancers in her experiences in topless clubs. Eavesdropping was an excellent source of data; one of the best means of obtaining information was listening to the gossip of the manager, the dancers, and the customers, about one another. It would be impossible for the author not to include her own experiences as a topless dancer as part of the data for her

thesis. Most of my information regarding the customers was from my own experience as waitress. The number of customers the author has observed is in the thousands. It was possible to question some customers concerning their impressions of the topless scene, the girls and themselves.

## CHAPTER II

### ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of the literature found only one source dealing directly with topless dancing. One paper was found on go-go dancing, which is the same as topless dancing except the women do not remove their tops. There were some sources dealing with stripping and strip clubs. The studies done on strippers and strip clubs were helpful, however, they are not really relevant to topless dancers or topless clubs.

One paper, "The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction" by Jacqueline Boles and Albeno P. Garbin, deals with the social organization of strip clubs. Their study sought to "further understanding of the social organization of the strip club by realting the effects of environment and spatial factors on stripper-customer relationships."<sup>16</sup> The data they found reinforced the major thesis of their paper, which was that the interaction between strippers and customers are characterized by counterfeiting of intimacy based upon inauthentic relations. The customers were there for sexual entertainment of sorts and the girls who work in the club foster and encourage this superficial sexuality for monetary rewards, whether for themselves or for the club owners. This exemplifies the "apperance of responsiveness, while the underlying condition is alienating."<sup>17</sup> Boles and Garbin define this as counterfeit intimacy. These findings are relevant to this author in that the same inauthentic relations were found in her

study of topless clubs.

Other papers on stripping were related to career dimensions of women who choose stripping for a living. These are "The Choice of Stripping for a Living," by Boles and Garbin, "Reference Groups and Becoming Committed to a Deviant Occupation: The Case of Nightclub Strippers," by James K. Skipper and Charles H. McCaghy, and by the same authors, "Stripteasers: The Anatomy and Career Contingencies of a Deviant Occupation." These papers were primarily concerned with stripping as an area of deviance, and the career commitment of women to a deviant occupation and hence a deviant lifestyle. The findings of these papers were not applicable to this author because she was not concerned with career commitment and deviancy in relation to topless dancers.

One other paper by Skipper and McCaghy entitled "Stripteasing: A Sex-Oriented Occupation," described and discussed "strippers' attitude toward sex and toward their occupation, the nature of stage performances, and strippers' involvement in off-stage deviant sex behavior."<sup>18</sup> This paper was not adaptable to the present paper because of reasons mentioned earlier regarding the difference of stripping and topless dancers.

One more paper written by the same authors, Skipper and McCaghy, entitled "Lesbian Behavior as an Adaption to the Occupation of Stripping," was concerned with the prevailing bisexuality among the women who were strippers. According to Skipper and McCaghy, this is due to "(1) isolation from affective



social relationships, (2) unsatisfactory relationships with males, and (3) the opportunity structure allowing a wide range of sexual behavior."<sup>19</sup> These reasons could be effectively applied to the topless dancers in the sample in the present paper. However, this author was not concerned with motivational factors involving homosexuality but rather that homosexuality was a characteristic more frequent to topless dancers as members of the counterculture.

Marilyn Salutin's paper, "Stripper Morality" deals with the ideology of strippers, especially how they handle the stigma placed on them because they are strippers. Topless dancers share some of the same rationalizations of strippers regarding their nature of their job and public opinion. Topless dancers employ some of the same defense mechanisms as strippers, for instance, that they are justified in doing what they are doing because society has created a need for a sexual outlet. However, as mentioned before, strippers are of a different orientation than topless dancers, in job description and lifestyle.

Carey, Sharpe and Peterson's paper entitled "The Go-Go Girl: Where she comes From and Where She is Going" deals with "the consequences of enlistment into the deviant women's occupation of go-go dancer."<sup>20</sup> Comparing data from a sample of go-go girls and college girls from a large southwestern university, they found that there were "significant differences between dancers and college with regard to such predisposing conditions as: childhood happiness, relationship with parents, family

orientation, and religiosity. Dancers also ranked significantly higher on impulsiveness, individualism negative attitudes toward authority figures, and self. Poor sexual adjustment, earlier age at initial intercourse, and more casual views toward sexual intercourse were also found to be significantly more evident among the dancers. Dancers drank, smoked, and used drugs significantly more than the co-eds."<sup>21</sup> This paper was of absolutely no importance to this author due to the relatively soft nature of their data. <sup>22</sup>

The source specifically dealing with topless dancing was entitled "Breakfast with Topless Barmaids" by Ames, Brown, and Weiner. This paper was a reproduction of a three hour interview of four topless barmaids in California, with additional comments by the author. The interview with the women provided information about attitudes, self-concept and lifestyles of the women who were interviewed. This author found many correlations in lifestyles and attitudes of the girls in the interview and those in her own sample. These women had the same attitude about their job, the same hassles with customers, the same variety of backgrounds, etc. as topless dancers in the present paper. However, Ames, Brown, and Weiner were really concerned with "To what extent can one consider the occupation of topless barmaid a deviant occupation."<sup>23</sup> A further discussion of this deviant definition of topless dancers is found later in this chapter.

The literature found by the author indicates that sociologists have tended to ignore the social or historical implications of semi-nude entertainment or the topless phenomenon. To quote C. W. Mills, "The informational character of social pathology is linked with a failure to consider total social structures. Collecting and dealing in a fragmentary way with scattered problems and facts of milieu, these books are not focused on larger stratifications or upon structured wholes."<sup>24</sup> It would seem to this author that a study of semi-nude entertainment would need to include its place within the overall society. If a sociologist is to study topless dancers and topless clubs as a deviation from the standard or norm of society, he should examine the structure of the norms themselves. However, in the literature, this author found there were no attempts to do this and instead, the writers tacitly sanction the normative structure within which they were writing. The literature reflected a concept of static order instead of social change. There were no attempts to see changes in the normative order as results in social transformation and change.

The literature found on semi-nude entertainment took only a fragmentary approach to the study of such phenomena. Fragmentary is used in the sense that only the women who worked in semi-nude clubs were studied. No sociological inquiry was made as to the type of customer who comes to semi-nude clubs or what type behavior the customer manifests in the club. The customers are considered to be part of the normative order by the sociologists.

However, they are participants in the same club interaction. Indeed, the clubs would not exist if not for a demand by the public. Furthermore, the entertainment and interaction between the semi-nude entertainers and the customers is in part defined by the customers themselves. Although several studies have been done on the motivational aspects of women who choose a profession in which they exploit their sexuality, no studies have been done on the customers who are willing to mutually participate in this sexual exploitation. It would seem that this would directly be linked to a failure in the normative structure of society. Sociologists have failed to look at the overall system that promotes semi-nude entertainment clubs and then at the same time teaches they are wrong.

This author feels that this is largely due to existing alienation within the society. However, a survey of the literature on alienation shows that often it is overly general and abstract and tends to ignore sex. Although the literature on alienation does indeed study alienation in terms of social, economic, and historical perspectives, how this alienation might relate to sex in a broad social sense is not mentioned.

### Analysis

The majority of the data for this paper was from the author's personal experience working in one particular club, Rembrandt's Paint Factory. Rembrandt's, one of the first topless clubs in

Houston, Texas, opened in April of 1968 and is still one of the most successful topless clubs in Houston. The location of Rembrandt's is mid-city in a part residential, part commercial area. It is located in a large old house. Rembrandt's is a semi-private club and, as the customer goes into the club, he enters a foyer and is greeted by a receptionist sitting at a desk. The receptionist checks the membership cards or takes the cover charge from the potential customer. She also screens out any "undesirable" people from entering the club. This setting gives a refined environment to Rembrandt's as a topless club.

Once in Rembrandt's, the most immediate thing the customer notices is the effects of the black lights. Under the blacklight, all colors take on a different hue. For instance, people's clothes look different, false teeth show up pink or green and drinks made with tonic show up as electric chartruse. The walls are painted with blacklight fluorescent paints in cartoon caricatures. The stage is in the middle of the club with the tables arranged around it. Various lights, red, blacklight, and strobe lights are around the stage to highlight the women dancing.

The bar is set up only for the waitresses to order drinks. There are no bar stools for bar customers. Rembrandt's is open from 5 PM to 2 AM Monday through Saturday. Five to seven women work depending on how busy the night is.

The name Rembrandt's Paint Factory comes from the fact that,

besides topless dancing, the unique feature of this club is the body painting of the dancers. The body painting is done by an artist employed by the club. From the hours 7 PM to 1 AM, the artist sequentially paints each of the topless dancers, usually every hour or so. After the woman is painted, she spends the rest of the night "wearing" her painting, which is highlighted by the black lights all over the club. The customers watch as the woman stands on the stage and is painted by the artist. The paintings ideally conform to a woman's physical features. A typical painting might be a rabbit on the woman's front side. The head would be on her breast, the mouth would be on the part underneath the breast, the body of the rabbit would be on the girl's torso and the paws would be on the thighs. The backside of the woman is somewhat easier to paint.

If a bachelor party or convention group is in the club, the painter will usually paint the name of the bachelor or some insignia of the convention on the woman. Another feature of the painter's job is to paint any woman customer who wants to be painted. Most often, a female customer will just want her hand or arm painted; however, sometimes she wants to be painted, topless, on stage. Many bald men come in and like to have their heads painted. If a man wishes to have his body painted, the dancers will paint him instead of the painter. In a sense, the body paint makes nudity more fun and less sensuous. It is as if the girls are clothed in blacklight paint instead of semi-nude.

The women are painted with waterbase fluorescent paint which easily comes off with soap and water. Many girls who work topless object to getting their bodies painted because it can be messy and may smear during the night.

The black lights and body painting at Rembrandt's were the response to counterculture or hippie culture fashions and fads that permeated America in the sixties. Rembrandt's capitalized (literally) on the blacklight and psychedelic craze born out of the youth movement.

The dancers are, of course, the feature attraction of the topless club. The women range from seventeen to thirty years of age. It is not difficult to become a topless dancer. A woman wishing to apply need only audition by dancing topless on the stage for the manager. A woman is hired on the basis of her looks, her figure, and to some extent, her personality, or the way she presents herself. There is a base pay for the topless dancer which is minimal and the women make most of their money on tips. Each girl keeps her own tips. There is no contract and no agent's service required to become a topless dancer in Houston. All the women need is a health card and a social security number.

Sociologists such as Ames, Brown and Weiner, label topless dancers as deviant. Using M. B. Cinard's definition of deviance as ". . . action in a disapproved direction of sufficient degree to exceed the tolerance level of the community," they placed topless dancers "somewhere between prostitutes and barmaids in terms of a

continuum of deviance."<sup>25</sup> The allegation that in California, lawmakers and the sheriff's department, under pressure from certain factions of the public, were challenging the legal status of topless bars, was offered as an indication that topless bars warrant the deviant classification. Another indication was that the women felt the need to justify their behavior to the rest of the community that disapproved of their occupation. On the basis of these two things observed within a two hour interview, topless dancers were considered deviant. The author of this paper seriously questions the correctness of their conclusion. The author feels a larger sample of topless dancers was required. Also a two hour interview is not sufficient, in the opinion of this author, to draw any relevant conclusions.

Carey, Sharpe, and Peterson, in their paper, "Go-Go Girl, Where she comes from and where she is Going," also view topless dancers as deviants. They use Holt's definition of deviance as ". . . behavior which varies markedly from an applicable norm, such behavior being subject to negative sanctions."<sup>26</sup> Support for this assumption was drawn from a survey of ninety-five college students. Their answers fit into the author's use of the definition. Students were asked "What do you think of go-go dancing as an occupation, and what type of women do you think make their living go-go dancing?" Typical replies were ". . . a good way to make money if you don't care what people think," "a good job if you can't do anything else," "it's a lot like stripping or being a



prostitute," "lower class," "bitches," "girls who don't worry about tradition," and "sexually hung up women."<sup>27</sup> The author definitely thinks the sample was far too narrow and that a broader spectrum of people should have been interviewed.

While it may be very true that the general public's response to toplessness is not one of overwhelming approval, this author would hesitate labeling the girls deviant on the basis of the data used in the above-cited papers. She proposes a more comprehensive description of the next women who are topless dancers. She feels that topless dancing is part of the counterculture and reflects hippie philosophy rather than being simply deviant. C. H.

Anderson made a distinction between subculture and counterculture.<sup>27</sup>

"Subcultures may be viewed as components of the dominant culture or as variations on some cultural theme. Subcultures usually represent specific interpretations of more abstract society wide values, but a subculture may embody a totally different set of definitions and expectations. In the case of the latter, the term counterculture may be more appropriate. Within a creative counterculture may lie the seeds of broad cultural change; but a counterculture may also be considered heretical and, if not fully viable, may be crushed by the dominant society. Subcultures, by contrast, are usually viewed by most as the lifeblood of a pluralistic society."<sup>28</sup>

In this perspective, topless dancers, as a group, will be discussed in terms of a creative (and relatively influential)

counterculture rather than a subculture. Social revolutions of the sixties, brought about a change in the values and standards of a large segment of people. Many attitudes and modes of behavior which were once considered deviant are now considered acceptable. Middle class morality was shaken by changes in sexual values and conduct. Members of the counterculture were proselytizers of this new sexual freedom and opted for a "totally different set of values and expectations," to live by. The entire population may not accept counterculture philosophy; however, it is forced to deal with it in one way or another. The counterculture, because of the publicizing of its different moral values, has influenced a majority of the population in the United States. I am not trying to say that dancing topless is acceptable behavior to the majority of the people in the United States; that is not true. If it were totally acceptable, there would be no need for topless clubs. What I am saying is that the women are not straying totally, so to speak, from acceptable patterns of behavior. Rather, they chose a means of earning a living that coincides with the standards and expectations of their peer group, counterculture.

Bennet Berger outlined eight counterculture themes in his article, "Hippie Philosophy--More Old than New."<sup>29</sup> Many of these themes coincide with topless dancers' lifestyle and philosophy.

1) The theme of living for the moment. The women working at topless clubs enjoy a lot of freedom. For one thing, money comes fast and easy in terms of tips. The girls receive fifty to

two hundred dollars in tips a week. Although club owners and managers try to maintain a schedule, it is impossible for them to keep strict order or regulations on when the girls come to work. Frequently, if there is a rock concert, a party, or a special boyfriend, the girls call in that they are not coming to work that night, and ordinarily they are not fired. Or, if they want to take a month or two off for vacation, if they give some notice, they are usually free to leave. They either come back to the same job or else they will go to another topless club and get a job. Although loose employment policies are intrinsic to clubs in general, topless dancers as a part of the counterculture simply insist on their freedom.

2) The theme of self expression. Music is intrinsic to the counterculture movement. "Hippies" consider music a means of self expression, especially rock and roll music. Dancing to music follows the same idea of self expression. The way that "hippies" dance is a solo dance, usually not in any particular steps, just doing their own thing, as they feel it from the music. Topless dancing follows the same course. The girls are on a stage, dancing solo and expressing themselves, through dancing, to the music. To enhance, sensuously, this idea of self expression, they dance with few clothes, exposing their bodies. A naked body, to a "hippie," is a means of self expression.

3) The theme of salvation by the child. This is not particularly applicable to topless dancers in the political sense. Most topless

dancers have a low level of political consciousness. Hence, topless dancers do not see the freshness and innocence of children as a new form of awareness for society, nor the incorporation of this philosophy in the school system as an important part of the education process. However, the lifestyle of hippies incorporates childlike activities, and many topless dancers take on childlike postures.

4) The theme of community or "to each according to his needs." Most topless dancers have participated in community living (quarters shared by more than spouse and children), and many have lived, at one time or another, in a commune. As mentioned above, topless dancers do not have a high level of political consciousness. Therefore, they do not feel the overall political or academic implication of the idea "to each according to his needs." However, the women feel that they are justified in receiving tips on the basis of this philosophy. They feel that people that can afford to come in and pay an inflated price for drinks can certainly afford to tip them well. A sizeable percentage of the customers that come in are businessmen on an expense account, and the women feel that they themselves will never see that kind of income and, therefore, they deserve a portion of their money. The topless dancers also feel justified in receiving large tips because they feel that they really work for their money by dancing and waiting on tables. But for the most part, they feel like people who patronize topless clubs have more money than they do and that a large tip is their just due.

5) The theme of paganism and the body as something clean:

hence, sex will set you free. The majority of topless dancers do not see their bodies as unclean, or exposing their bodies as something dirty. Most of the women are proud of their bodies, in the sense that all human bodies in their natural state are beautiful. It would be a mistake to assume that all women who become topless dancers have perfect bodies, nor would it be correct to assume that, since women dance topless, they have large breasts. This is not so; topless dancers vary in every conceivable size. Some women do have silicone transplants, but in my sample I only found three girls who had had silicone operations. Obviously, women who choose topless dancing as a profession are to some degree exhibitionists.

6) The theme of changing place, hence mobility and transiency. The turnover rate for topless dancers in a club is high, usually every four to six months. Women will work at one certain club, then tire of that club or find the working relationships uncomfortable, or see more money elsewhere, and quit the job that they have. They either go to another club, take a vacation and come back to the same club, or quit clubs altogether. As I mentioned earlier, the money is good and comes fast, which makes it simple to leave. Also, the lack of rigid schedules and contracts make it easy to change jobs.

7) The theme of sexual equality and free convergent lifestyles between the sexes. This is an interesting subject. Of course, topless clubs are built upon the male exploitation of the female body, they exist purely for a man's pleasure. The women dance topless

to satisfy a man's desire for physical entertainment and the women sit and talk to men at their tables to amuse them and build up their egos.

Until recently, women suffered discrimination in job status, job availability, and salary, in a male dominated job market, except, perhaps as a professional topless dancer. In the past year, the author has noticed a rising consciousness about feminism among topless dancers. Topless dancers were slower to catch on to the feminist movement compared to other counterculture members the author has known. Because feminists began demanding their rights as human beings, and consequently the media began to publicize the feminist cause, topless dancers are becoming aware of women's liberation. Although topless dancers do not feel discrimination in a political sense, in a personal sense they do; and they do not want to be affronted because of their sex. Although the women are aware of the sexist nature of their job, this does not keep them from dancing topless. Many women have no other job skills and realize that topless dancing is a lucrative profession. One woman commented that, while sexism is far more blatant in topless clubs than in many other jobs she could get, she would experience the same demeaning attitude about women; the sexism would just be more subtle. Many women argue that exploitation is in reverse--that men are the ones being taken by the girls. They laugh at men who leave big tips because they fall prey to a woman playing up to their egos. The women are by no means militant about feminism, like many members

of the counterculture. Realizing the monetary potential, they say that they like to dance and like to get paid for it. They do not mind the chauvinistic rituals that they have to go through so much that they consider discontinuing dancing. Another point to mention here is that a majority of the topless dancers are bisexual. Only three of the girls in this author's sample were strictly homosexual. Here bisexuality relates to the lifestyles in the topless club. Bisexuality displays their sharing of the feelings of sexual equality and sexual freedom of counterculture. They feel free to have and enjoy sex with females. Many of the girls were bisexual before they began working in topless clubs. Other women participated in group sex and have bisexual experiences this way. Some of the women are introduced to homosexuality through the bisexual girls in the club. A few women become so turned off by the behavior of men in the clubs that they choose to have sexual relations with women instead of men. Few of the women are ever pushy about homosexuality to the other women who are not inclined to bisexuality. These girls, who were bisexual, sometimes become attached to each other as lovers. However, they rarely mind if one or the other chooses to be with a man instead. Bisexual women like to go to afterhours bars and dance together after work.

8) The theme of consciousness expansion and the use of drugs. Drugs are at least as intrinsic to topless dancers and topless clubs as to other manifestations of the counterculture. The job of a topless dancer is a strenuous one, mentally and physically, and

for many girls, drugs alleviate the stress and strain of the job. Part of the job as a topless dancer is to create a party mood within the club, and the girls sometimes feel that they need drugs to create this "fun" atmosphere, constantly. Also, clubs are not designed for dealing with reality as such, they are more for escaping reality, and drugs are a quick means of escapism. Some women feel that if they take drugs, they will loosen up and dance better; however, too many drugs usually have the opposite result. The women have to suffer the sometimes obnoxious behavior of the customers and drugs make that ordeal somewhat more bearable. Occasionally, a girl with a heroin habit will work topless. Heroin addicts are not a part of the counter-culture drug group. In fact, most of their co-workers are very careful of these girls; they don't trust them because they are junkies. Usually these women do not work in clubs very long because the job is too much of a hassle for them when they are strung out on heroin. There are some topless dancers on the methadone program.

All types of drugs are taken by the girls. Alcohol is available to them in most clubs, free of charge. Pills, uppers and downers, are used by at least two-thirds of the dancers. Marijuana is used by virtually all the girls who work in the clubs. Psychedelic drugs were popular with the dancers until two years ago; now, they are rarely used.

Topless dancers are not simply members of the counterculture or hippies, but much of their lifestyle does follow counterculture patterns. The author felt it necessary to point out that labeling



topless dancers as deviants per se is an inadequate description. She feels that more accurately, topless dancers, as a social group, are associated with the counterculture. Particularly, topless dancers do not fall into the stereotype and deviant image that sociologists have conceived for strippers. Topless clubs and hence topless dancers were born in a different era than were burlesque theatres and "Strippers." Topless clubs were a product of social and cultural innovations as were topless dancers. Unlike strippers, their ideology has not shaped and molded by middle class disapproval of their occupation. Sociologists themselves were often guilty of fostering the stereotype of the maladjusted and deviant stripper because sociologists were themselves often tied to the middle class value system.

In any case, topless dancing emerged at a time when even sociologists were unsure of social definitions. Topless dancers were, therefore, able to define themselves in a positive manner because of the lack of solidified and socially approved definitions of morality.

Topless dancers are "average people." The average educational attainment for topless dancers is eleventh and twelfth grade. The women come from every social and economic class, but most of them are from a lower middle class background. The age of topless dancers ranges from sixteen to twenty-six. Approximately one-third of the women are single, one-third of the women are married, and one-third of the women are living with a man. Often the women

support their husbands or their "old man." The term "old man" in club vernacular applies both to a husband and to a man living with a woman. Dancers frequently complain that their old man will not work, but they rarely ever ask him to leave. In part, it is because she is a part of the counterculture philosophy that believes in convergent lifestyles between the sexes so she doesn't care which sex supports the household. Other times, it is because she is insecure about keeping her "old man" and thinks if she supports him, he will stay with her. Some women derive a sense of power by supporting the household. In many cases, the old man has a drug habit which the woman supports. Approximately one-fourth of the women have children whom they support. This is a hardship for the woman because while they work, they must arrange for child care.

Topless dancers quickly become friendly with one another. Their lifestyle tends to isolate character from their other friends. Their hours and their work do not mesh easily with the lives of the "outside" acquaintances they might have. Clubs are designed to promote fast familiarity. Alcohol, dark lighting, and the small spacial area of clubs lends itself to an intimate environment. Because the women work together in this environment every night, they become very close. After work, they frequently go to after hours clubs, go to breakfast with one another, or socialize and smoke marijuana at one or another's house. Bisexuality obviously is conducive to friendliness among dancers. Topless

dancers spend money easily. The ready cash made available through tips is an incentive for the girls to spend casually. Although they make fairly good money they never seem to keep it for very long. It is not important to the girls to build up any kind of savings. Most of their money is generally spent for dope, expensive clothing, restaurants and their "old man's" drug habit. Clubs, because of their intimacy, also lead to quick emotions. They disagree most frequently over tips, call customers and boyfriends.

It is difficult to say what women do after they discontinue topless dancing as a profession because topless dancing has only been in existence for ten years. Many women tire of working topless and leave topless dancing for a waitress job that isn't topless. Some dancers become bartenders in other clubs. Other dancers leave clubs to get married. Some leave clubs to go to another part of the country or live in a commune. A few topless dancers leave clubs to work in the "straight" world. And some women find prostitution a more lucrative profession than topless dancing.

One woman quit her job as a topless dancer and began working in a day-care center for little children. She came back to the club one night to visit and told everyone what her new job was. They were very surprised and commented on what a change in jobs she made. She replied that wasn't exactly true, there were many similarities in a day-care center and a topless club. The children need and demand attention and the men need and demand attention. The children want a glass of water and the men want

a glass of booze. The children like to play with toys and the men like to play with the female body. The job of topless dancing requires three responsibilities: waitressing, dancing, and entertaining the customers.

1) Waiting on tables - This is a constant part of the job. The women have certain tables that they are assigned to take care of, or else they take turns taking customers as they walk in the door. This part of the job is like any cocktail waitress' job. The women are to see that the customers have drinks and that their tables are clean. Often, if a customer becomes acquainted with one certain woman and likes her a lot, he will ask for her as a waitress every time he comes to the club. These men are called customers. Often, he will tip larger than the usual customers. If a woman is a good waitress and gives friendly service she will probably enhance her tip. However, this is not as important to the tip as dancing or entertaining the customers.

2) Dancing - This is what many topless dancers consider the fun part of the job, although, by the end of the night, it gets to be extremely tiring. Almost all of the girls really like to dance and really like to perform in front of an audience. At first, the women are shy about dancing topless in front of an audience, however, after a while, they loosen up and are less inhibited. Alcohol, marijuana, and "pills" also help the women to become less inhibited on the stage. Although there is competition among the women as to who is the best dancer, there is very little hostility that goes

along with the competition. When a woman becomes too enamored with herself, and behaves accordingly, the other women quickly put her in her place. Often the women will encourage each other's dancing and teach one another new dance steps. New women to the club will copy the dance moves and gestures of the older dancers. If a woman is a talented dancer, she will frequently receive bigger tips. Sometimes the customers will pay a woman to dance for him. The money ranges from one dollar to twenty.

After the women have been around, they learn a little dance savvy. That is, they not only learn little extra moves, but when they are executing them, they look directly into their customers eyes and make them think they are dancing just for them. This also increases their tips. The women dance to popular rock and roll music in current dance styles, adding a few erotic or sensuous moves. Although the women try to be sexy dancers, they also hope to initiate a lively atmosphere within the club. If the customers are having fun and enjoying the dancing they will drink more, stay longer, and tip larger. The girls create a party atmosphere by dancing to fast music, clapping their hands, and playing the tamborine.

3) Entertaining - This is the most difficult part of the job. It is also the most important part of the job as far as money is concerned. When the women are not waiting on tables and not dancing, they are to sit and talk with their customers. This is not a hard fast rule, however, if the women wish to make any money,

they would be wise to do this. Here, if the girl cares to do some fast manipulating, she can make a lot of money. Women who are experienced in topless clubs know which customers to spend time with and which customers will not tip, and would be a waste of time. It is smart though, to spend time with each of the customers because any amount of time spent with customers may enhance the tip. Ideally, the purpose of this is to make light easy conversation and flatter the customer's (men) presence in the club. These conversations usually are fairly general, like "Where do you come from?" "Who is that girl dancing?" "Is she available?" "What horoscope sign are you?" "Do you want to hear a joke?" (usually dirty) "Will you have a date with me after work?" However, it's not always that simple. More than often, the men will try to touch or feel the girl's bodies. It's more like a game than a real sexual maneuver. It is as if the girls are play toys for most of the men. There are some men who are more serious about this physical maneuvering and they would like the girls to respond by touching and feeling their own bodies. However, most customers are content with merely pinching, grabbing, and/or feeling. Most of the women are disgusted by this; they feel that this sort of act affronts their dignity. Nevertheless, some women will go along and respond to the physical zealousness of the customers. One thing that the women do is to give "titty hugs." A titty hug is the act wherein the woman grabs the man's head and puts it between her breasts. This is usually hilarious to the other men who are with him or the other men in the club. The women who are so

inclined to do this will most usually receive a big tip. This display of adventuresome behavior is rarely found at Rembrandt's. In clubs, and especially topless clubs, there is a lot of physical touching, kissing and hugging. This is because of the sexual milieu of the club and because people are more inclined to touch and show physical affection when they have been drinking. However, the women feel there is a fine line between inconsiderate physical gesture and a maudlin hug and kiss. The girls, themselves, are not immune to physical affection for the customers; however, they would like to at least salvage a little dignity from it. If the customers get out of hand, the management will intervene and protect the girls. Misbehavior by customers is one of the larger hazards of the job. New girls frequently cry after repeated physical overtures from the customers. Older girls will respond by either ignoring them or insulting misbehaving customers. Often, a group of men will come in and they will offer to pay a girl to enthusiastically kiss one of the more retiring and shy members of their group. The men think it is very funny to see this man's (usually shocked) reaction.

Another aspect of entertaining the customers, is to listen to the problems of the men that come into the club. There are a lot of lonely men who come in by themselves to escape their problems. Usually these problems have to do with their home lives. They want someone to talk to and the girls in topless clubs are uninvolved people who will listen to them and usually offer sympathy.

Part of the topless dancers job is to boost the feelings of the men and when the men feel better, they will tip better.

Often, customers just want conversation and they like to hear the girls talk about themselves. The lives the girls lead is usually so different from the lives of the businessmen who come into the club that they are fascinated. Some women take advantage of this opportunity to extract a big tip by telling him a sob story. These stories usually are about sick children or her mean "old man" who beat her, or her cruel and harsh childhood. Most of the time, there is only a small element of truth to these stories, but the customers often fall for them. They are reminiscent of the myth of the struggling, good-hearted stripper or prostitute who is doing her best to make it in this cruel world.

Sitting with the customers is a good time for the girls to pick up a "trick"\* as the expression is used. The women will let the customer know she is seriously available for a fee, or else the men will ask the girls if they are interested in doing something after work; if the girls reply "yes, for a price" or something similar, a deal is made. Sometimes the woman will insist that the man give her an extra large tip as part payment for the "trick." There may be deception; women will sometimes lie to a customer and tell them they will "trick" with him after work, keep the large tip he left her and never show up for the trick. Maybe twenty percent of the girls will occasionally turn tricks outside the club. At Rembrandt's the percentage is smaller; perhaps, five

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\* A "trick" in this paper refers to a woman soliciting her sexual services for money.



percent. The management does not care if a girl occasionally "turns tricks" outside the club; however, if she uses the club just to pick up tricks, she is fired. This is bad for business in that she may be arrested by the vice squad of the police force which then puts the club in jeopardy with the police force. This type of news travels fast and gives their club a bad name for other customers who would fear any potential involvement with the police.

As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of sitting with the customers is to make them feel good, drink a lot, and show them a good time. Often times, the women will feel warmth and genuineness of feeling for customers, but usually these customers are regulars or semi-regulars to the club. The topless dancers try to manipulate the customers as best they can to receive a large tip. The customers, on the other hand, try to manipulate the girls to build their own ego and satisfy their needs for sexual attention. It is alienated affection for money.

One additional thing the girls do to entertain customers is to dance on their tables. This is usually when a large group of men come in, a bachelor party or men with a convention. Occasionally, they also try to get the customers to dance with them on the stage. Sometimes, the men will dance, but more often they try to get the females to dance on the stage.

Jacqueline Boles and Albeno Garvin, in their paper, "Strip Clubs and the Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction," list four motivations of men who come to Strip Clubs. These are: (1) seeing

the bodies of semi-nude or nude females; (2) satisfying their curiosity about girls who strip for a living; (3) having someone attractive listen to their problems--something to do; and (4) acquiring sex at the cheapest possible price. These reasons also hold true for men who patronize topless clubs.<sup>21</sup> This author would add two other motivations: (1) entertainment--many men and couples come to topless clubs for entertainment and for a drink just as they might go to a sports event or to a nightclub featuring clothed entertainment. Topless clubs have become an acceptable place to entertain friends or clients; (2) Machismo--many men have a desire to feel strong and powerful and feel they satisfy these needs by coming to a topless club. They have the upper hand (on the surface) and they can say just about what they please to the women who work there, and also the women are there just to please the male desire for entertainment.

There is a variety of customers who come into topless clubs. They range from those who come in every night to those that will enter a club only once in their lifetime. However, they can all be loosely classified into groups.

1) Sexually Sick. Sexually sick customers are those men who come into the club to stimulate their perverted sexual fantasies. Their attitudes regarding sex do not fit into the standard norms of our society. Whether the standard norm of our society's attitudes about sex are healthy or not is another question. These men form a small percentage of the clientele of the club. They

sometimes bring a newspaper or a brief case into the club and masturbate behind it as they watch the girls dance. The men may ask the girls to masturbate them under the table and behave as if they were not doing anything. Or, they may be talking normally and suddenly take thir waitress's hand and thrust it on his groin to show them they have an erection. Usually, when the girls discover what the man is up to they will tell the manager, who will, in turn, make the man leave the club. Occasionally, there will be a woman willing to go along with this and charge a fee for her services. This fee ranges from fifty to one hundred dollars.

(See Appendix A)

2) Sugar Daddies. There is a sugar daddy type in every topless club. These are men who attach themselves to one girl for any reason; because her hair is blond, or her legs are pretty, or she is nice to him or whatever. These men usually pretend she is their girlfriend and fantasize about her. Sometimes the woman will engage in sex with her sugar daddy, however, more often she does not. That is part of the relationship the sugar daddy will either fantasize sex with her or he will make an issue of pursuing her sexually but knows it is to no avail. They tip in large quantities-- from ten dollars to two hundred dollars. A steady sugar daddy will always leave a steady large tip. Sugar daddies also help the girl with her other expenses like buying a car, paying the rent, buying her clothes, etc.

Sugar daddies do not seem to have extremely fulfilling lives outside the club. Many sugar daddies are single--either bachelors, widowers, divorced, or else their wives are out of town. If they are married, it is generally an unhappy marriage. Usually they are single because, if they were married with a family, they often could not afford to spend so much money on another woman. Many sugar daddies are quite well to do, however, they do not have to be extremely wealthy. Many times a sugar daddy will spend his entire paycheck on a woman. Sugar daddies derive a great deal of power from the money they give a woman. This is their mechanism to hold the woman's attention and affection. The woman realizes she should take advantage of a lucrative income, however, this relationship often becomes binding to her. Sugar daddies don't always have the most gregarious personalities or they would not be in a club buying a girl's friendship. Therefore, sugar daddies are often boring or obnoxious. Sometimes, a sugar daddy will drink excessively, while other sugar daddies will have only three or four drinks and tip three or four times the amount of the check.

There is a certain amount of possessiveness or sense of property that the women have about their sugar daddies. None of the other women are allowed to move in on her sugar daddy. If someone does, a conflict develops, and generally the other girls will take the side of the original woman with the sugar daddy because they would not want anyone to do the same to them.

A sugar daddy receives a certain status around the club because he gets a reputation for spending a lot of money and this makes him seem important. He likes to think of his woman as his little plaything that he can give money to and she can, in turn, build up his ego and make him feel big. Sugar daddies desire attention and receive this attention through money. Frequently, sugar daddies relationships last only from six months to a year. The girl might leave clubs altogether or go to another club. The sugar daddy might tire of giving away so much money, become angry when his woman won't have sex with him, or find another girl more to his liking. (See Appendix A)

3) High Tippers. High Tippers are those men who come into the club frequently and leave large tips somewhere between three and twenty dollars. These men include topless clubs as part of their social life. They are usually bar hoppers and will make the rounds of several clubs in town. They may or may not have a steady girl to wait on them. However, if they have no preference for a waitress, the girls usually know who he is and they will compete with one another to wait on him. The fact that the girls know who he is and that he tips well is very important to this type of customer. It is almost as if he is tipping more for himself, to flaunt his wealth and show how important he is, than for the girl's benefit. They are usually lonely men between the ages of twenty-five to forty. Most of them are single. Many times they are in the process of obtaining a divorce or in the aftermath of a divorce. Instead of

dating, they frequent topless clubs. Sometimes they are looking for a pick up. Sometimes they will pay money for a trick. These men are a small percentage of the clientele of topless clubs. They enjoy drinking alot and they also enjoy watching girls dance topless. (See Appendix A)

4) Regular Customers. Regular customers are men who come into the club at least two or three times a week. Everyone who works in the club knows them. These customers like the club and this is where they find their friends. Regular customers are, in turn, well liked by the employees of the club. These customers range from hippie freaks to businessmen. They are not a threat to the topless dancers, because with regular customers they can be relaxed and honest. The girls do not have to put up a false front to obtain a tip. In fact, regular customers rarely tip in large amounts, some regular customers do not tip at all. These men come to the club not necessarily for the sexual atmosphere of the club, but for the companionship found in the club. The relationship between the topless dancers and regular customers is the most genuine relationship of all the customers; the wants and needs and emotions of these customers are genuinely taken into consideration by the women and vice verse. One regular customer came directly into the club to cry after he found his father had died. Another regular customer periodically brings in dinner he has cooked himself for the employees of the club. These men are almost always single. They will be a regular to the club for maybe a year or so.

Many times they will find a girlfriend or marry and discontinue coming to the club. Often they will bring their girlfriend to the club so the employees of the club can meet them. (See Appendix A)

5) Businessmen. Businessmen are customers who have a professional job ranging in the middle to upper income bracket. These men generally come into the club dressed in suits and ties. They are usually married, with families, and live in the suburbs. These men come into the club for a variety of reasons relating to business ventures. They may come to topless clubs with business associates to relax and have a drink to talk over the day's work. They may bring business clients and potential business clients into the club to entertain them in hopes for more business. All of these men are out to have a good time, supposedly. They are away from their wives, their families, their community and the restrictions that accompany them. Robert Roland, a former club owner, cites three reasons he feels businessmen need to entertain in a topless club. One reason is that topless clubs alleviates the boredom of their lives. Many men, because they are businessmen, are expected to live up to certain community standards, which many feel are boring. Topless clubs are an escape to them. Many men are from towns other than Houston and have never been to a topless club. This is a new and exciting experience for them. Often these men have never had a personal encounter with a topless woman. This leads to the second reason which is that men have a strong curiosity about the female body. The level of biological awareness regarding the female body is low,

for many men. Watching the girls dance topless satisfies some of their curiosity. The third reason he gave for the customers presence in the club was that it gave many businessmen a chance to impress their associates with their machismo. If they take a client to a topless club, this means they are important--a "man about town."

Because businessmen are often on expense accounts, they are likely to spend more and hence tip more. Businessmen will always tip the appropriate 15-20% plus more if they feel the woman went out of her way to deserve it. If she danced on their table, gave them hugs and kisses, titty hugs, or danced well, they will tip extra. They look at this as a pure market transaction. Businessmen invest their money and expect to receive proper sexual attention for it. It is almost as if they think what they have paid for, they have a right to grab. (See Appendix A)

Businessmen sometimes are very physical in their interactions with the topless dancers. They like to grab, pinch, and feel the girls. They are the customers who especially like the titty hug ritual. They also are looking for a girl to have sex with. Ideally, they would like her to go with them of her own volition. However, most of the time, if they want any sexual favors, they have to pay for them. They think, because they are in a topless club, it is easy for them to pick up a trick. Some women do turn tricks out of the club, however, it's only a small



percentage, usually ten percent.

6) Conventioners. These are customers who come into topless clubs because they are members of a certain professional or business organization holding a convention. Many conventions come to Houston because the city is a large business and oil center. Rembrandt's receives a lot of convention business because it is one of the older more established clubs in town. These customers are all from out-of-town. Many times they are from areas not as cosmopolitan as Houston which do not have topless clubs. Therefore, they have never seen a topless club or a topless dancer before. Like businessmen, they are married with families and live conventional lives at home. They are all on expense accounts and spend lots of money on drinks and girls. They come in groups and are out to have a good time and "raise a little hell." Conventioners also are physically overzealous with the girls, grabbing, pinching, and pulling at the women as they go by. They would like to find a woman to have sex with also. They are more willing to pay for this, because they have extra money due to their expense accounts. These men are more relaxed and less formal than businessmen entertaining. Many businessmen are still on a business deal when they are out, conventioners have left business behind them. It is more acceptable for conventioners to party and act loud and obnoxious. They drink rather heavily and spend lots of money. They tip for the service and attention they receive; it is a pure market for them like businessmen. Conventioners will also tip in large amounts if the

woman clowns around with them and dances on their table and hugs and kisses all of them. Sometimes the girl will get one of the men to get on the stage and dance himself; everyone in the club just loves this.

7) Couples. Couples frequent Rembrandt's Paint Factory more than any other topless club. Friday and Saturday nights are called couple nights at Rembrandt's. No other topless club is open on Saturday night because that is the time that men go out with their wives or a date rather than with the guys. The couples come to Rembrandt's because the women that work there are not quite as flashy or wild as the girls at the other clubs. Therefore, couples feel more comfortable around topless dancers who are not so sexually flamboyant. Couples come to Rembrandt's to see what a topless club is like. Or, they like the entertainment at topless clubs. Men, of course, by society's standards, enjoy watching topless women. Richard Taft, a former manager at Rembrandt's, thinks that women also enjoy watching female bodies. He thinks this is true just as men enjoy watching the male bodies perform athletics, women enjoy watching female bodies perform dance steps. It is subvert homosexuality. Some couples, however, do not enjoy themselves once they have come to the club. Their moral standards are offended by the sexual atmosphere of the club.

More women than men are offended by toplessness. Some women are more threatened than offended by topless dancers. The author once overheard a conversation in the ladies room. The women were

conversing about how shocked they were at women who will dance topless, and their amazement at the topless scene in general. Near the end of the conversation, the author realized that it was one of the women's birthday and she had chosen to come to a topless club as part of her celebration. While the men feel socially bound and determined to enjoy topless dancers and topless clubs, the women feel socially bound and determined to feel offended and shocked at topless dancing. Some women are noticeably unfriendly to the topless dancers and others are extremely friendly and want to know all about the topless scene. Many couples come to Rembrandt's just to watch the body painting. Some couples enjoy Rembrandt's so much that they will become regular patrons of Rembrandt's. Part of this thing when couple customers are in the club is to get these women on the stage to dance. Everyone in the club likes to watch a member of the audience dance on the stage. Usually the woman is high on alcohol and dances on the stage and has a marvelous time herself. Topless dancers do not care for couple customers as much as men customers, because often the women are unfriendly and the tip is not as high. One mechanism to neutralize this hostility from the women is for the waitress to cater to the females and always make sure they get good service and enjoy themselves. The women hopefully will feel better and hence the man will feel more comfortable and therefore tip more. Couple customers are generally a more refined group of customers; they are not loud or obnoxiously drunk. At one time, Rembrandt's was a campy place for couples to go. Now it's not so

much, but the club still does a large volume. (See Appendix A)

8) Young Men. These are usually college students or hippies who are out to have a good time with the guys. They come into topless clubs to see what's going on and to try to get to know the girls working there. The women usually like these customers because they can relate to them; they both have the same interests. Many of the women will go out with these men after work or on their day off if they like them well enough. These customers rarely have money to tip well but the girls don't mind. They enjoy talking to them. (See Appendix A)

9) Bachelor Parties. These men come in a large group with the prospective bachelor to entertain him before he gets married. It's important for the prospective bridegroom to get very drunk and receive lots of attention from the girls. This is ordinarily a jovial group of young men who are participating in the ritual of entertaining the male before he enters matrimony. The women are expected to pay a lot of attention to the bridegroom and kiss him and tell him they will miss him terribly if he marries another woman. They often paint his face with black light paints and get him on the stage to dance with them. They also dance on the bachelor's table. Bachelor parties tip very well because they pool their money together and because the girl usually puts on a good act for them. The girls realize that bachelor parties are high tippers and this is one reason they participate in their rituals. (See Appendix A)

10) Lesbians. These women come to the club because they are interested in the women sexually. They enjoy watching topless females dance. Often, the topless dancers are gay and these women that come to the club are their friends. Lesbians are discouraged by the management because they are afraid that this will turn off the business of heterosexual males. Sometimes lesbian women will make passes at the topless dancers who are not homosexual, but this rarely occurs. (See Appendix A)

### CHAPTER III

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The interaction between topless dancers and the customers becomes a game of exploitation. Boles and Garbin discuss this in their paper, "Strip Clubs and the Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction." "It must be remembered that as the stripper perceives the customers objectivying and exploiting her, in turn, she is objectifying and exploiting them. Thus, the club is characterized by a great deal of mutually exploitive interactions masked by an aura of intimacy--a counterfeit intimacy."<sup>30</sup> This holds true for topless clubs also. The women who work topless are there for one thing: money. They use their body, their sexuality, and their personality to manipulate tips from the customers. They do this because they feel the customers exploit them and treat them as sex objects. The customers, on the other hand, feel that topless dancers exploit them and treat them as money objects. They realize that if they are to receive attention and sexual affection from the girls, they have to tip, and the more they tip, the more attention they will recieve. But money is also the customers' defense, because they know that the girls are dependent upon them for tips. Boles and Garbin call this counterfeit intimacy which is "relations that give the appearance of responsiveness while the underlying condition is alienating."<sup>31</sup>

Nightclubs, in general, are not designed to foster reality,

and topless clubs are one of the most blatant offenders of reality. Topless clubs promote and sell sex, but any emotion of sex in its real sense is absent. Why this non-sex sex? It is as if the normal biological sexual experience is not enough, people need to be titilated commercially. It is sex alienated from the normal biological process. Maybe a sizeable percentage of the women who work in a club are hookers, but a very small percentage of the men who come into a club are going to have sex with these women and even then, it is sex in exchange for money.

What is the overall social structure that promotes this type of attitude regarding sexual behavior? Has the increasing technological commercial age implanted in us a false consciousness, such that we think we need artificiality in sex? It may be that sex is just a commodity like everything else. This could be parallel to Karl Marx's conception of fetishism of commodities, wherein sex becomes something other than sex--an image of sex. This is the heart of the philosophy behind topless clubs. Sex is not dealt with in a real sense, but as an image, a commercial idea. Sex is emoted in an artificial manner. Women don't work in a club to have a real sexual encounter with the customer; they are there to project a sexual image--a sexual enticement without intercourse. It is the sexual sensation that is important, not the sexual act.

Philip Slater, in his book, The Pursuit of Loneliness, says the setting and interpretation of the sex act has come to hold more excitement than the act itself because of sexual scarcity.<sup>32</sup>

Drawing from Freud's Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis, he says that sexual aggression has a direct relation to civilization. Civilized people have more energy than their non-literate counterparts, which he feels has to do with the utilization of energy. He goes on to say that, according to Fred Cottrell, in his book Energy and Society, intermittent energy is useless, but anything that would transmit intermittent expenditure into constant expenditure would be highly valuable from a technological viewpoint. In order to get a man to work endlessly for a reward that never comes we must create a scarcity because only through scarcity can an abiding surplus of energy be assured. Philip Slater says that sexual desire is the perfect raw material for scarcity, since it is an impulse both powerful and plastic. "In a hypothetical state of nature, it is the only form of gratification that is not scarce, in fact, it is infinite. Out of an infinite plenty, is created a host of artificial scarcities."<sup>33</sup> We are affluent, yet there is a sense of deprivation and discomfort. The root of sexual scarcity lies in man's capacity to generate symbols which can attract and trap portions of the libido, according to Slater. The mechanism for generating sexual scarcity is to attach sexual interest to inaccessible non-existent or irrelevant objects. Mass media has sexualized everything that is sexless, i.e., automobiles, shaving cream, cigarettes, etc. This symbolic baggage becomes so attached to the sexual impulse that the mutual stimulation of two bodies seems meaningless. "Man may have sexual intercourse as often as he



wishes and still feel deprived because his desire has attached itself to someone or something unattainable."<sup>34</sup>

This is, in part, an explanation for the artificial behavior in topless clubs. We become very attracted to an image of sex. We are trained, in our society, to key into symbolic pleasure rather than physical sexual pleasure. So, therefore, the sexual enticement, such as a female dancing topless before a group of men, is more important than the sexual act between two people. According to Philip Slater, by the weird device of making his most plentiful resources scarce, man has managed to make his most scarce ones plentiful.

Capitalism in the United States utilized this theory to make a highly developed highly technical society. Ascetism and Prudery, which is one-half of the Protestant Ethic, was instrumental in the early development of Capitalism in the United States. There was less emphasis placed on pleasure or sex-oriented activities (sexual scarcity) and more emphasis placed on working, saving, and putting energy and resources into expanding the economy. This proved very successful and the capitalistic economy expanded into a highly developed state. As capitalism developed, consumption was encouraged. Economists such as Keynes, say that to maintain a capitalistic economy, there has to be enough aggregate demand to avoid a depression and further capitalism. The system could, therefore, dispense with a lot of ascetism and prudery and hence indulge more frequently in pleasure-oriented activities. Consumer

sex services are consistent with this; sex has become a commodity.

The author is not intending to give a history of the developmental stages of capitalism. The point to be brought out here is that sex as a commodity does have an economic and historical background. And, in the United States, sex as commodity can be found in the development of Capitalism.

For Karl Marx, an important part of the development of capitalism was the increase in alienation. The higher the level of capitalistic development, the higher the level of alienation. "Alienation, for Marx, means that man does not experience himself as the acting agent in his grasp of the world, but that the world (nature and others, and he himself) remain alien to him. . . . Alienation is essentially experiencing the world and oneself passively, receptively, as the subject separated from the object."<sup>35</sup> Again, the author is not intending to give an analytical development of Marx's theory of alienation. However, she feels that Marx's alienation theory is relevant to the development of sex as a commodity. Through work, Marx says, man creates his world, and consequently himself. It is the way man recognizes his own nature.<sup>36</sup> The capitalistic system takes from the worker all control over labor itself. Further, Marx says that man is alienated from the species. "Man has an innate striving toward his ideal nature. He is basically a productive being. Productive life is species life, it is self-creating life. Alienated labor alienates man from the species. The point in working is that, in working, we realize ourselves.

Alienated labor takes away the object of production from man, it takes away his species life."<sup>37</sup>

The social and economic theory of alienation is suggestive of the key points involved in sexual alienation. Marx says that man's need to work is his need to create. Through capitalism, his creativity had been taken away, he works only for survival. The same theory could parallel for sex. The need for sex is the need to create in a human and emotional sense. Man has become alienated from sex through the structure of the capitalistic society he lives in.

In order to furnish motivation and energy to expand our capitalistic system, sexual scarcity was invented, and, by restricting one of man's most natural biological functions, through the use of prudery and ascetism, man built a plentiful and highly developed economic system. As consumerism and hence the cash nexus followed in the development of capitalism, sex restrictions seemed less important. And, sex began to be used as a commodity, a commercial idea.

However, our society is still not without some prudery and ascetism. The sexual revolutions of the sixties were born out of discontentment with the existing system. Marx said, that as man becomes alienated, he becomes immiserated and his consciousness level will rise against the existing order. Capitalism would never have allowed a sexual revolution at all if it had not passed from a developmental stage to one of mass consumption.

It was due to the sexual revolution of the sixties that toplessness emerged as a phenomenon. However, the capitalist system was too firmly established for a total sexual revolution to fully occur. Therefore, topless clubs were the product of a stagnated sexual revolution under capitalist conditions of market and morality. Therefore, sex becomes more acceptable the more the cash nexus enters in. Capitalism allows people to participate in a blatantly sexual scene through money. The more sex becomes a matter of money, the more it is alienated from its real sense.

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## APPENDIX A

### Analysis of Cash Exchange Between Girls and Customers

- Type of Customer
- 1) Waiting on Tables - Service
  - 2) Dancing
  - 3) Entertaining

### Sexually Sick

- 1) Not important in extracting cash
- 2) Dancing important if they want to masturbate
- 3) No conversation just perform sex acts

### Sugar Daddies

- 1) Unimportant
- 2) Act like you are dancing to him and for him
- 3) Very important, flatter him, money power by going along with his fantasy, make him feel important, big, etc.

### High Tippers

- 1) Important that you are checking on his drinks to make sure he is happy and comfortable
- 2) To get a cash exchange you must be a good dancer to go along with his ego.
- 3) Make him feel good, build his machismo, know his importance.

### Businessmen

- 1) Important--good service.
- 2) Important--come to be entertained--sexy
- 3) Important--make them feel good--may be set up trick.

### Conventioneers

- 1) Important--like to drink alot
- 2) Important--come to be entertained sexy
- 3) Important--make them have wild time, dance on tables, get them on stage, set up a trick.

### Regulars

- 1) Important that you always get them, call drinks, and strong drinks
- 2) Unimportant
- 3) Important--know his sense of belongingness--family in club setting but only for the good of the club not for your own monetary needs your personal needs.

### Couples

- 1) Important especially to females
- 2) Important come to be entertained not sexy
- 3) Important to make couples feel at ease, comfortable.

### Freaks/College Guys

- 1) Not important
- 2) Important they get off to dancing
- 3) Important they like to talk to girls usually vice verse

### Lesbians

- 1) Unimportant
- 2) Important that's why they come
- 3) Important only to pick up a chick.

### Bachelor Parties

- 1) Important--to bring alot of drinks
- 2) Important--especially to dance to bachelor
- 3) Very important, sit in bachelor's lap, dance on table, hug,  
kiss