

**The Acculturation of Stripping**  
**By Kayleigh M. Stack**  
**Writer, Blogger, Ethnographic Researcher, Provocateur**  
<http://kmswritings.pressfolios.com>

*“In real life a man might compliment a woman’s eyes though he is really staring at her tits, while at a strip club he can feel at ease to skip the bullshit and tell her straight away that she has nice tits, the hell with the eyes”*

-Amy, 24, ex-female stripper

Whether or not one has attended a strip club, most people understand the general concept of the venue; nude, or almost nude women dancing for men. Although the clubs are legal facilities, the women participants are often stigmatized from outsiders who are not involved in the lifestyle. Once inside the club, however, the stigma dissipates and the female dancers are accepted from their male customers, even venerated. In contrast, while the females are stigmatized from “outsiders”, the males that attend the venues are rarely condemned. Since the men are not permitted or *suppose* to do anything with the ladies, attending a strip club is not viewed as an act of infidelity for the most part, if the customers do happen to have a significant other. Just like getting a drink or playing a game of pool, the institutionalization of a strip club makes it acceptable for men in committed relationships to look at another woman’s body; often considered to be just another male bonding ritual.

While men can go with their friends, have a drink, and enjoy the surreal experience, or even “fantasy world” of a strip club, the female dancers are in a constant state of performance. It is a performance that is disassociated from their “real selves”, while still using very intimate pieces of their “real selves” in the performing character. The quote above is from Amy, an ex-striptease dancer who worked at a New Your City strip club for six years. She makes a comparison between “real life” and the “strip club life”. Amy’s differentiation of the two is indicative of how a strip club is perceived by the women; the sexuality, flirtatious smiles, and winks are all an act. However, although it is considered a performance to many strippers, the reader might notice in the quote above that, as Amy is differentiating her “strip club life” from her “real life”, she also is interpreting her “real life” to have similar male characters that she would have been in her “strip club life”. The men in her “real life”, from Amy’s perspective, also seem to only look at her “tits” and not care for her eyes, the only difference is that in her “real life” the men are not as blatant. The way that Amy views men outside of the strip club may signify that her “stripping self” has been internalized in her “real self”.

Stripping, like most jobs, usually has an economic goal. As all jobs, one wants to be good at what they do and receive positive feedback. When one becomes more competent in their position and adapted to the work environment, it is reasonable to increasingly embody the “work self”. Along with increasing competency at a job, one may also start to feel “official” in the position, being accepted by both the co-workers and clients. The increased competency and official feeling that develops over time from a job is a product on acculturation, which has the ability to reduce the separation between the “work self” and the “real self”.

The following paper will look at the cultural domain of stripping from the women's perspective. I will discuss how playing an alter ego in the strip club, which is considered an "alter reality" to many of the dancers, has the ability to shape one's "real life", infecting other cultural domains the dancers may associate themselves with. After years of normalizing the stripping experience, "reality" and "performance" can become one in the same. Therefore, I question if one can actually separate their "work self" from their "real self", especially in the case of stripping, where one's "work self" is dealing with such intimate pieces of the "real self". I believe as one stays in any job long enough, there is an acculturation process that takes effect. The acculturation of stripping eventually creates less of a distinction between the two selves.

Toward the end of the paper, I also will briefly analyze how the institutionalization of strip clubs provide a way for males to outwardly maintain their fidelity and commitment to their significant other, without being condemned for viewing another woman's body. In contrast, however, I argue that perhaps it is *also* the legal facility of a strip club that provides an approvable way for men to commit acts of infidelity without being reprimanded.

The data for the research was collected from three different informants who have all danced at the same strip club in New York City for about five to six years each. One interview was conducted with all three, ranging between 1 ½ to 2 hours a piece. All three interviews were unstructured, revolving around the theme of their experience with stripping. I realize that more interviews, with each of these women, as well as with additional informants, would have made for a more reliable ethnography, however due to the time restraint and the limited number of qualified informants in the local area, a larger study was unable to be conducted. In addition to the interviews, some of the data has also come from my own personal two-day experience dancing at the same New York City strip club. All names have been changed for the protection of the informants.

### **The Strip Club:**

I will give a brief description of what the inside of this particular New York City strip club looks like, where all of the girls I interviewed worked. I will also discuss the standard procedure customers go through upon entering:

In the large, windowless brick building with its warehouse-type doors, walking up to the outside of the club, one might question if it were a club at all. The only way for one to know of its existence is by the large, usually Hispanic or African man standing in front of the doors checking IDs. Upon entering, before going to the stage, customers are allowed to cash in some of their money for FUNNY money, helping to facilitate the fantasy experience of a strip club environment. Following the money exchange, one can proceed to the larger room, which is really the only room; except for the small private ones in the back that cost \$1000 an hour each to rent. The large room is covered from wall to floor in red velvet rug. To one side of the room there is a long black plastic bar with an attractive bartender behind it serving, what is usually mostly male customers. To the other side of the room there is a clear plastic stage where women dance. The stage is clear for different colored lights to be projected up onto the women when they perform. Growing out of the center of the stage in a slim, silver metal pole that extends all the way up to the ceiling for the dancers to integrate into their choreography if they wish. Scattered around the stage are cushy chairs and tables, as one might see in a 1940's cabaret lounge. At night, the lighting is dim and

seductive, creating a sexy ambiance. During non-operation hours, when the lights are on and women are clothed, one can see the un-sexiness of the decor, with its cheap plastic furniture and slightly brown velvet rug. However, with the right furnishings, music, and women, all of that is easily disguised to create the perfect fantasy atmosphere of a strip club.

### **Stages of the Night:**

Throughout the night the dancers follow a flexible routine. The following section will go into detail about each stage of the evening and how the women's "work" or "stripping" selves change from stage to stage.

#### **Stage 1-Preparation: *The dressing rooms***

Women start to come in about two hours before the club opens to get ready. Putting on one's work attire involves a small G-string, three inch heels or higher, and a tight gown that ties or clips around one's neck for it to easily become undone. At this point the ladies are preparing for their evenings roles. Samona, a 23 year old ex-stripper described the preparations:

*"If you want, you can see the makeup artist, but you have to pay her, but you definitely do look better, it definitely does make a difference in the money you make for the night. If you need a dress you can buy a dress up in the dressing room, again you have to pay for it. The same thing with heels, the same thing with garter belts and your thongs and all that bullshit. To get all prettied up and turn into a Barbie doll."*

The turning "*into a Barbie doll*", as Samona called it, is the transition from her "real self" to her "work self". The make-up and props, such as garter belts, are some of the essentials for the ladies to be attractive. Attractive, for the ladies, is equivalent to 'profitable'. This is a stressful time because the attraction is beyond themselves, it is for people who they have yet to meet and most likely have little desire to do so, however their ability to attract these individuals will result in their pay for the night. Although most of the women are friends, it is a competitive atmosphere, and each are aware they have to be as desirable as possible to compete against the other beautiful, seemingly perfect ladies. In the individualistic cultural domain of stripping, the self is centralized. Amy remembers the first time she had to get changed in front of all the women:

*"Though we did change in front of each other to a certain extent, we were always careful to advert our eyes, always conscious of turning our backs to one another, and more often than not we would change separately in the bathroom."*

The nudity that most of the women participate in on a nightly basis, from Amy's point of view, was not necessarily accepted behind closed doors. This was likely due to the competitive nature of the environment. Knowing that one's income was based on their "body technologies" (Wesely 2003), it can be uncomfortable to reveal themselves to one another due to tendencies of judgment and comparisons. Kitty, another 23-year-old ex-striptease dancer, had a different experience her first night in the dressing room.

*"I remember my first experience just being shocked at how comfortable the women were with changing in front of one another, because they were, I mean, they were literally walking around*

*without a g-string, oiling up their bodies and talking about, like, what they had for dinner. Like completely naked and it was just like, whoa..."*

The comfort the women had with their bodies that Kitty experienced, was a product of acculturation to the strip club atmosphere. Like any job, the women became more comfortable with the lifestyle and nudity had grown to be standard. The time spent in the dressing room is also a way for the girls to talk with one another, bond, and normalize the experience. Although it might not be spoken about, the open nudity and the common everyday chit chat about "dinner", creates a friendly work environment where each women have a chance to perhaps ease their nerves and express who they are outside of being a stripper.

## **Stage 2-Mentorship: House Moms**

*Samona: "Before you go down stairs the house mom makes sure your clothes are right, the thong meets the required covering of your body and all that bullshit. She was basically like your representative to the owners and the manager of the club for the girls"*

When the women are done getting ready, they approach the *house mom* to escort them down stairs to the DJ to pick out their three songs to dance to for the night. The *house mom* is a woman who takes care of all the girls' needs in the club, watches out for them, and as Samona explained, is their "representative". Amy also commented how on most occasions, she can also be their therapist:

*Amy- "The house mom is usually a middle aged women, who looks like a librarian, plain, or like a seventh grade teacher. Most of them were in it because it was good money, because all the girls have to tip her out every night, usually getting, like, \$10 from each girl. So, lets say 50 girls work that night, the mom makes \$500. That's great. But, she has to deal with really crazy psychological problems also, and a lot of the girls count on the mom as a mom and call her mom. Girls really call her mom, no matter what her name is. They will say "mommy look what I brought you" they will bring her things, like, sweets or pictures. A lot of girls are seeking some sort of family, which they get in the strip club environment"*

*Kitty: " There were some house moms that were old and toothless and really wanted to be everyone's mother and you kind of felt bad for them because they were up so late, but they loved it, they loved being our mom"*

The *house mom*, although also an employee being paid by the strippers themselves, has the power to create a family environment, bringing comfort to a place that could be considered uncomfortable to many at first. Many of the girls appreciate going to work and having the *house mom* be there for them. The "work self" is therefore not only associated with *stripping*, but also includes an entire social network involving friends and a "mother", which many of the girls view as their extended family. This behind the scenes, off stage character, which is not a performance, is as much apart of the women's association to the strip club as their "stripping selves". It is imperative to comment on these additional elements that are included in their lifestyles to understand how the two identities,

the “real self” and the “work self”, are easily fused together in one environment. Because the women are able to be their “real selves” with the other girls they work with, a lack of distinction is made between the two personas. The *house mom* therefore may play a primary role in the acculturation of the strip club. She supplies a sense of belonging, creating a domain for the women to integrate their “real selves” into their “work selves”, making it easier for them to adapt.

### **Stage 3-The Character Development: Stage Names**

Once the girls have chosen their three songs to dance to for the night, many sit at the bar or make small talk with customers until their name is called to perform. At this stage, even when the women have not gone on the platform to showcase themselves to the male customers, they are already performing. The “real selves” have been left back with the *house mom* in the dressing room and now the ladies will only respond by their stage name. A stage name is given to each employee to protect their identity. None of the names are too conspicuous, in order to make the men believe that the strippers are disclosing true information about themselves, to help facilitate as real of an experience as possible for the men. However, the club can only protect the women to a certain extent. It is expected that with the stage name, the women will also attach to it a false history so when the men ask “where are you from” the females do not disclose any of their own personal information. Kitty and discussed the characters she would slip in and out of every night:

*Kitty: “I was always performing even off stage. I actually pretended to be different characters on different nights or change it up throughout the night. So sometimes I would have a British accent, and sometimes a southern accent, and I would change where I was from and what college I went to. Usually I went to NYU or Columbia, haha, but that’s just because I could, since it was an alternate reality anyways.”*

*Samona: “You come up with some bullshit, you make up stories every night, which creates more of this fake world of nonsense cause you end up with some sob story, like “I’m from Minnesota and I’m a struggling actress that is helping her grandmother fight diabetes”, which make them want to take care of this poor unfortunate individual. So you become more attractive and become more vulnerable, even if its complete fucking bullshit.”*

Although many of the girls are in a constant state of “make-believe” some have expressed disclosing too much information at times about their personal lives to customers who they saw as “normal”:

*Amy: “ I did disclose information about my true self, and too often. I found when I would drink I’d be thinking “oh, this guy is totally normal” and then I would wake up the next morning to be like, “oh my god I just told that guy the real school that I went to and where I am from and oh my god, if he wanted to, he could come find me and chop me up”, and I would freak out. So there is a reason for those aliases, they protect you.”*

*Samoa: "I would always disclose personal information when I thought I was starting to get to know a guy after a 15 minute conversation, but you quickly realize that, oh well... he may be polite and he may be asking you questions, but he doesn't give a shit about the answer. He certainly isn't asking you questions because he actually wants to know anything about you. Guys don't go to strip clubs to find girls. Guys go to strip clubs to have fun for themselves. So whatever I disclosed didn't matter, but I still shouldn't have shared by personal life stories"*

The girls expressed a constant battle with maintaining the "alter ego stripper self" separate from their "real-life selves" on the job. Like in any job, often times people want to convey to their clients and customers that they have a life outside of the workplace and that the persona they take on in the "work environment" does not portray who they actually are as a person away from that atmosphere (ie: authoritative figures, teachers, ect). As a stripper, this becomes even more relevant, especially in Amy's case, because she wanted to demonstrate that she was in college working toward a future career, to not just be seen as a stripper. The desire to express true details about ones selves demonstrates the decline of separation between the *real* and the *work* personalities. The tendency to see men or clients as "normal", as Amy put it, exemplifies the battle of separating one's "real life" mindset from that of the alternate reality of stripping.

#### **Stage 4-The Exhibit: Showcasing one's self**

*Samona: "On stage it's basically advertising, you know. Cause when you're walking around the floor you are just one of the girls walking around. When you are on stage everyone can see you. And depending on what music you play you can get people's attention. And the club does everything in their power to make you look attractive. Ya know there is a fan at the end of the stage blowing your hair back and a fog machine and lights...ya know, all that crap"*

Once the women hear their stage name called by the DJ, they hop on to the plastic platform and dance for the duration of three different songs. The women's performances are an un-choreographed freestyle. The only rules that are required are; for the first song the dress must stay completely on, the second song they have to undo the dress and dance with it half off to show their breasts, and the last song the dress must come entirely off, so the women are only left dancing with their 3-inch heels and G-string. The stage is where the main performance of the women's night takes place. They demonstrate what type of character they are to the men and how they want to be perceived for the remainder of the evening. From the performance, the women are able to build confidence for themselves and draw in customers for the night. It is for this reason some of the girls wait until they dance on stage before talking to any of the customers.

*Amy: "I was really horrible at approaching guys and be like, "hey you wanna dance" I never knew how to approach the situation and sit down at a table, and so I would have to dance on stage at the beginning of every night."*

It is a way for the ladies to let go of their “real selves” and transition into their “stripper alter ego” for the night. The women also accumulate a sense of power from being up on stage performing. Many of the dancers know the men want to speak with them after, and it’s the women who get to choose which customer they attend to first when they are finished with their three songs on stage.

*Kitty: “The way that I would do it is, I would pretend I was a burlesque dancer and not a stripper. I would slowly start to take the top on my dress off and then I would quickly put it back up. And I would do this a few times. And I would look guys in the eye, individually and know that they were watching and be like, “nope, sorry, just a tease”. So after I was on stage, I would get a million offers of, “come sit here, come sit here.” “*

One’s income can be a result of how well one performs. The persona that Amy would create on stage was the “armor” of her alter ego. In this character she was confident and willing to take on the night’s ventures. Before dancing, Amy could not speak to customers because she had not created an alternative character for herself yet, and felt too vulnerable and unshielded to approach men. The “stripper self” develops from the dance performance, as well as from the women’s stage name. Creating an “alter ego” helps to justify as well as normalize the experience for the women, where they do not have to associate their “real selves” with their “stripper selves”. This nightly ritual of Amy’s that she went through to “get into character” became a standard procedure for all six years she worked at the club.

#### **Stage 5-Making the Profit: The Off Stage Performance**

Following the performance, the women are expected to mingle with the customers and begin making their nights pay. As described by Amy it is fairly easy to find the first customer after dancing on stage. If a man calls the dancer over and she accepts his invitation, it is common courtesy for the man to offer the lady a drink. Since none of the women are “supposed” to drink on the job (which many still do) the club has created a false cocktail called the *Viper*, for the women to request when the men offer. This helps to create the illusion that the females are sharing a drink with the men, since many of them are unaware that the *Viper* is a non-alcoholic beverage. In addition, it also brings in more revenue for the club since the *Viper*’s pineapple and orange juice non alcoholic concoction costs about \$14 a glass.

If the men are sharing a drink and just conversing with the dancers, no money is expected to be exchanged, however, this will usually not result in a very long interaction since the women are there to work, not to socialize and meet people. The men are typically aware of this, and even though they would like to think the women are especially interested in spending time with them and not the contents of their pockets, the men will often dole out cash just to keep their company around. If a man requests a dance, it will cost him \$20 a song with a variety of other rules that Samona explained:

*“There are all these rules in a lap dance, they can’t touch you, you can’t really touch them. You have to have like one foot on the ground at all times. Like, there are all these little distinctions. He can only get what he really wants in a private room”*

Although the ladies are still performing when they are having a conversation or dancing for the men in a corner of the club, it is during this time that the women must work at maintaining their “alter ego”. Men want to believe they are special and women need to make them feel like they are significant.

The better the women are at doing this, the more money they usually receive. This is accomplished not only with the use of their bodies, but as many of the girls told me, by playing “therapist” for the men.

*Amy: “Men would come there to sooth there problems. The first day I worked, I met a guy that came because him and his wife were having a divorce. He told me I didn’t have to dance, he just really needed someone to talk to, and I thought “right, he needed someone to talk to, and the best person he could think of was a 18 year old stripper?” So we ended up staying in the private room for three hours, just talking and drinking Champagne. I remember thinking, “this seems so glamorous, I’m being served Champagne and I’m sitting with a handsome man” who was like crying on my shoulder. The whole thing was just absurd. He was upset and crying and I was comforting him while also making fun of him, and he just totally didn’t pick up on the fact that I was making fun of him at all and I just kept thinking, “I’m just drinking Champagne and getting \$500 an hour to be in this room”. He was just some business douche bag in a suit. And he ended up tipping double the amount of the room and I came back to the dorms with \$3000 dollars.”*

*Kitty: “I learned how to play the game, so I was just a therapist and I made money, a lot of money, in a night for getting drunk and hanging out with guys I probably would have hung out with in real life anyways.”*

Amy’s experience was in a private room which cost the men \$1000 an hour to rent, which \$500 of the \$1000 would go to the stripper. This was the only occasion the management allowed the women to drink. Men would purchase private rooms for an array of reasons. The most common reason, expressed by the girls, was to talk about the men’s problems, accompanied with alcohol and an assortment of drugs. In this setting, women were not necessarily stigmatized as “strippers” it seemed, but the men viewed them more for their “maternal instincts” or “feminine” qualities. They saw the women as willing to lend an ear and offer condolence. Amy comments how it was still a performance, although the man did not see pick up on this. While she was overtly making fun of him, he cried on her shoulder. The private room created the false imagery of having a “real” encounter with the stripper, but for the women it is all a part of the show. However, at the same time, Amy’s “real self” did enjoy the experience, evident when she comments “*oh my god this is so glamorize, I’m being served Champaign and I’m sitting with this handsome man*”. The experience created an illusion that she was living a glamorize lifestyle. Her “real self” digested the experience the of the strip club domain. Samona also showed signs of her “work life” becoming intertwined with her “real life” emotions when she decided to sleep with someone at the club because he was attractive:

*“I only sleep with one guy in the strip club and got paid for it and the only reason why I did it was because I thought the guy was cute, so that was a win-win situation”*

This represents that although one can change their names and make themselves out to be a different person in a different cultural domain, the experiences are not distinct to the domain, but are constantly internalized. This internalized experience creates emergent factors in ones personality, resulting in a change of perspective. I will discuss more about this in the conclusion.



## Internalizing the experience:

Both Amy and Kitty speak of some of the experiences as being exciting, fun and “normal”. The “normalcy” of the evenings developed out of the women both embodying and becoming more competent at their jobs. One’s own reality is whatever they make it out to be. The “fantasy environment” of a strip club has a tendency of becoming “normal” or at least revealing hints of normal life, after spending an extensive amount of time in the atmosphere. “Normal life” is an ambiguous term; in this article, the way the women use it, normal life is referred to the women’s lives *outside* of work. When one expresses their work experience as normal, it is likely one will begin to view the world in a different way due to their new experience, because the experience is not distinct or omitted from their personality, instead they become pieces incorporated in the person, which is a form of acculturation. Amy discussed with me a time where she was influenced from an experience she had in her “work life” in her “real life” relationship.

*Amy: “This one guy that I played therapist to cried to me for an hour because his girlfriend was pregnant and he was no longer attracted to her and he didn’t know what to do about it and he didn’t know how to become attracted to her. And he was like, “I just feel like its this, you know, this foreign body growing inside of her, and its like between us and always there, and its always moving and its this Alien” and I was like, “Oh my god, that’s so gross, that’s so creepy, yea that’s totally gross” and at the time I totally agreed. And then last year, I had an abortion. And when it first happened I thought back to that customer and thought “oh my god, my boyfriend is going to leave me” and then I was like, “oh wow Amy that’s fucked up”, that’s because I fucked myself up good when I was a little girl. That’s not how most people operate or think. I just absorbed and internalized all these stories. Certain things like that will pop up that I don’t even realize I absorbed until later”*

Kitty also had a similar experience:

*Kitty: “And then it really took my confidence away as well, because guys would bluntly say “No I’m only into blondes” or whatever. People said what was on their minds and then it affected the way I thought about what people were really thinking in real life. And then it started to drive me a little crazy because I heard this “No I’m not interested in you I’m only interested in blondes” all the time in real life. So in real life I thought “Oh my god what if he is only into blondes, and he is looking me like that because he is only into that, and that, and that!” and I just started to over analyze people. Until I got to a point where I couldn’t differentiate reality from alternate reality. It’s very hard to have one foot in both of those at the same time. You have to be immersed in dealing with people in one way, and dealing with people in another way”.*

A person is made up of a compilation of selves, and “the stripper self” is just another one of those selves for these women. The personality traits that are “performed” are eventually more emphasized in a person’s “real self” after bringing them to surface on a regular basis. When these new personality traits emerge from one’s experiences, as the “stripper self” experience develop into the “real self” or personal frame of thought, the two identities become much more interconnected over time. Whatever lifestyle

choices one is involved in has the ability to transform one's perspective. Our "real selves" are affected by our "work selves" experiences.

*Amy: "The longer I stayed, the more fucked up I had to be. At first what allowed me to do it was that feeling of, "Oh my god, I'm doing something wrong, oh my god this is exciting", and then once that faded and I didn't have that anymore and I couldn't say I was 18 anymore and I couldn't say it was my first night then it became.....I had to drink, or else it was just ...I don't know, the seediness began to show and...you know...you could really see what was going on. I can't remember when exactly it faded, but with that environment, coupled with everything else, just being young in the city, and we were all...you know...doing drugs and drinking to excess... and it was just part of the scene, and I don't think I first thought of it consciously as "oh my god I'm getting fucked up in order to do this (go to work)" it was really just like, "lets get fucked up and go to work, it's fun" and it was just like routine."*

For Amy her work become apart of her lifestyle and her lifestyle became a part of her work when the "novelty" of the alternate reality began to wear off and the "make-believe" life became reality. Samoa also told me how her personality began to change in everyday interactions she would have with men outside of the strip club:

*"It changes you opinion of men, you start hating guys and you start looking at them as things to play with. I started realizing that every guy I met outside of the strip club I started looking at them at the angle of how I could get what I wanted out of them"*

After almost three years of not stripping, Kitty said that she still embodies stripper characteristics:

*"A lot of my friends joke around and they say that I have a "walk" and my manager jokes around with me and he says that's why I attract assholes because I have a "walk". I don't really know what a "walk" means necessarily. But apparently I have a certain type of walk and I definitely associate it to doing that. Oh or sometimes I'll do stuff like I'll start running my fingers through my hair, like I'll have my head at a certain tilt and I will look over and I'll catch a guy looking at me. And I won't even realize I was doing something but then I'll think "ah I was doing that again."*

Each of the women have shown signs of acculturation from the strip club domain. Although there was always a conscious distinction made between their work and real selves, all cultural experiences are absorbed, later to become emergent properties, which have the ability to transform the way one views life.

## **Discussion of the Females**

The cultural domain one is involved in, affects how one interprets reality. Although a NYC strip club is inside the culture of New York City, the strip club is another cultural domain all on its own, because it has different rules and regulations that separate it from the "outside" or "street culture" of the city. The "real self" and the "stripper self" terms that were used throughout the article resemble the different modified identities the women associate with, in effort for them to separate the two cultures. The transition of one cultural domain to another is experienced with all people; many people are able change from one title to the next depending on the environment they are in (i.e Mom, boss, sister). As one is able to transition between the different personas, one absorbs and digests their experiences from each

domain. Therefore, the encounter in one domain is never distinct to that one culture. It is through these different experiences transmitted from a culture to a person where emergent properties take affect, resulting in transformation, for better or for worse.

Throughout the interviews with each of the women, there was a constant use of “reality” and “alter reality”. The alter reality, although experienced by onlookers as a “fantasy world” for adult men, is in fact another cultural domain the women are involved in. Therefore, although there is a tendency for the dancers to call the strip club an “alter reality”, it is not a dream or another dimension, and the experiences within the club have very real effects for the women. Making a distinction between the “work self” and the “stripper self” can only be available to a certain extent. The “two selves” are in constant dialogue with one another. For example; if a businessman has an office in Abu Dhabi and in New York city, he will constantly be switching back and forth between the two drastically different cultural domains. It is highly unlikely though, that he would completely disassociate the cultural norms that he acquired while working in New York City when in Abu Dhabi or vice versa. The two different cultural practices are integrated in that man’s self and he has become an amalgam of the two worlds. Acculturation from the different lifestyles take affect, whether conscious or not. Labels and names can change, but the person’s experience with each of the labels cannot be disassociated from one another.

#### **Discussion on the Male customers:**

The institutionalization of a strip club makes it convenient for men to be with other women without actually committing any infidelity. Although I have not interviewed any male customers, all of the women whom I spoke with explained to me that most of the men who were in the club were in relationships. They seemed to express their feeling about their significant others to the strippers to justify why they came. Although some men would come with friends just for a fun night, others went for an array of other issues, usually involving their current relationship. Instead of jeopardizing their relationship through extramarital affairs, a way for them to stay faithful, but still enjoy the company of a woman without the responsibility of another female, was to go to a strip bar. The “strip club” facility could therefore be viewed as a venue that helps men abstain from cheating. In contrast, depending on what one classifies as cheating, the clubs can also be viewed as venues that actually promote infidelity. As I have already stated, I do not have a sufficient amount of research from the side of the male customers and therefore can only give speculations. A more extensive study needs to be conducted to valorize all assumptions made here.

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