SHAKE IT HARD:

FEMINIST IDENTITY AND THE BURLY-Q

A Thesis

presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

PORTIA JANE KING

Dr. Wayne Brekhus, Thesis Supervisor

AUGUST 2008

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

SHAKE IT HARD:
FEMINIST IDENTITY AND THE BURLY-Q

presented by Portia Jane King,

a candidate for the degree of master of arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

_____
Professor Wayne Brekhus

_____
Professor John Galliher

_____
Professor David Crespy

I want to thank all of my friends and family who have loved me enough to continue to support me, even when sometimes it was from very far away and with very little communication for extended periods of time. Specifically, I want to thank my parents who have always encouraged me to follow my dreams, my brother and sister-in-law who remind me daily that all can be handled with a little laughter, and my best friend who uprooted his life to hold my hand through this.

I dedicate this paper in loving memory of my grandparents who passed away during its conception.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Wayne Brekhus, for all of the help and guidance that he has given me over the last two years. His experience has been invaluable to me during this undertaking.

I would also like to thank the members of Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue. The women and men of Little Mama's have taught me the importance of believing in yourself and never letting anyone else define who that is. Thank you for opening your family to me.

Finally, I would like to thank the Blue Note of Columbia, Mo for allowing me to conduct research in their facility.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

Can a woman remove her clothes knowing about the gaze of the other and still maintain feminist ideals? Can she legitimately use her body to further her feminist and political ideals? I will examine the historical rise, fall, and revival of burlesque in the United States and how burlesque has been both reinvented and reinforced by the neo-burlesque movement. I will also look at public performances by Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue, a queer/ feminist neo-burlesque troupe residing in Columbia, MO, a Midwestern college town, to show how social activism and feminism can and do line-up with historical burlesque ideals. By applying the social movements model for assessing cultural forms of entertainment of Rupp and Taylor, an argument for Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue's engagement in social protest could be outlined in terms of contestation, intentionality, and collective identity. It was found that the local troupe did follow the model and that while having stepped away from the origins of burlesque appears to be a part of the evolution of burlesque

Women are no longer to be considered little tootsey wootseys who have nothing to do but look pretty. They are determined to take an active part in the community and look pretty too.

-Lydia Commander, 1909

Public portrayals of female sexuality have long been and continue to be a heavily debated subject in both the social sciences and popular culture. At the heart of this debate is feminism and how it plays into the exposure of female flesh. Can a woman remove her clothes knowing about the gaze of the other and still maintain feminist ideals? Can she legitimately use her body to further her feminist and political ideals?

It is a common position in feminist pornography literature, especially in radical feminist literature, that pornography cannot be separated from the objectification of the male gaze over the female form and the subsequent degradation of the female, though the specifics of the arguments may differ (Bart 1985, Beneke 1990, Clark 1983, MacDonald 1990, MacKinnon 1984). However, while much of the literature is useful for assessing certain displays of the female form, it fails to account for context. In *Towards a Feminist Erotica* (1987), Kathy Myers argues that all images are engaging in some level of objectification but that there needs to be some way of distinguishing those representations that exist to dehumanize women from those that operate against it. While some level of objectification may be present, the understanding of why the display was constructed and its intended operation as a display of the body is key to the development of full view of how the display is operating. Simply put, it is not as

easy as just assigning the objectification label to every display of the sexualized body.

There are many differences between the burlesque of the mid to late nineteenth century and the burlesque of the twenty-first; however, the traditional burlesque roots are clearly exhibited. I will examine the historical rise, fall, and revival of burlesque in the United States and how burlesque has been both reinvented and reinforced by the neo-burlesque movement. I will also look at public performances by Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue, a queer/ feminist neo-burlesque troupe residing in Columbia, MO, a Midwestern college town, to show how social activism and feminism can and do lineup with historical burlesque ideals.

Historical Burlesque

While many view burlesque and feminism to be in clear opposition to one another, history shows us that this is not so. The history of burlesque in the United States being legitimately displayed on the stage began in 1860's New York with the popular troupe Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes, though the ground work was laid even earlier in the 19th century (Sobel 9).

> From [Lydia Thompson] on, burlesque in America was inextricably tied to the issue of the spectacular female performer, and from then on burlesque implicitly raised the troubling questions about how a woman should be 'allowed' to act on stage, about how femininity should and could be represented, and about the relationship of women onstage to women in the outside, 'real' world (Allen 1991).

A man could act a part on the stage while a woman on the stage was there being viewed as just that, a woman. Men could accept money for their stage presence, but a woman accepting money for being on the stage was accepting it for displaying her body—a notion that greatly predates burlesque (Allen 1991). The distinction between the two continued to be controversial well into the time leading up to when Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes invaded the American stage.

Shortly after Thompson's performance in the bourgeois' theater space, burlesque moved to a working-class form of entertainment; this change happened for many reasons. The only reason directly linked back to staged burlesque had to do with the perceived corruption to both the female performers and the middle class patrons attending the showing (Buszek 2006). Seeing the displays of femininity that the female performers exhibited in both their public and private lives both confused and threatened the greater society. The United States was governed by Christian morality, even in the theater space, and while prostitution ran rampant with male clientele from all classes getting in on the action, the upper and middle classes feared the change that might take place in their own daughters due to their exposure to the sexualized women of burlesque. It was this thought process that led them to conclude that burlesque's risqué nature and its possible effects were better suited for the working class (Buszek 2006, Allen 1991).

It was during this time that the first deep rooted misunderstanding of burlesque took place. There were the misconceptions on the part of the upper

and middle classes based on their fear of what the effects of burlesque could be. However, also during this time there were two different types of burlesque that emerged that did fulfill some of the upper and middle classes' fears about the risqué nature of burlesque and gave them support for the displacement of burlesque from the bourgeois' theater space. One of these forms was what Irving Zeidman referred to as scratch burlesque or "turkey" shows.

Scratch burlesque was characterized by small troupes—one or two comedians and a couple of dancers—who performed without much by way of costumes, sets, and stages and exploited the sexual nature of burlesque in order to turn a quick dollar. Their shows focused on making as much money as possible by luring in men who were looking for cheap thrills and then moving on to the next town for the same purpose. Their scenes mainly consisted of "phallic insinuations of pickles, bladders, or frankfurters" (Zeidman 1967). These types of shows, which had little to do with burlesque and everything to do with turning a profit, helped in the early work of giving burlesque its bad name in the legitimized space but helped skyrocket the now deep rooted stereotypes of the strip show. It was also common practice to send the women in these "productions" out before the show to entice a clientele and promise "richer rewards" for them after the show (Zeidman 1967). These types of troupes were also the first ones to spring up in the Eastern and Eastern-Midwestern parts of the United States that existed outside of the major cities since they required so little overhead in order to make money and had guaranteed appeal.

The other form of burlesque that is believed to have helped tarnish its name in the eyes of high society and aid in the decision to remove burlesque from legitimate theater space was the honky-tonks and saloons of the Western part of the United States where burlesque performers were hired to be entertainers. While what these entertainers did stopped shy of burlesque, they were lumped under the same heading. In a similar destructive pattern as the turkey shows promising rewards after the shows, the honky-tonks used comedians in their show to make insinuations about their clientele and the pleasure that they would be experiencing all in front of their wives which helped to spread the word about the lewd nature of these shows. In the Western and Western-Midwestern parts of the United States, where the traditional European and East Coast burlesque of Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes had not yet penetrated, this kind of “burlesque” was the standard (Allen 1990, Zeidman 1967).

While scratch burlesque troupes and honky-tonks saw themselves as a part of the burlesque movement, those who had been on the legitimate stage saw them only as a threat to burlesque and the legitimacy that it had been struggling for with the upper and middle classes and while this is partly true, these types of burlesque shows were the first to start spreading the news of burlesque across the country. In the long run, this helped further its presence in the United States. While the art form was no longer accepted in the bourgeois’ theater space, it was still surging forward in its quest for legitimacy.

In the end, some of these honky-tonk type shows expanded and became "legitimate" burlesque theaters. While these shows were now legitimized as a form of burlesque simply because they were a part of a bigger theater company, they failed to gain the respect of the true burlesque shows by offering their women up as prostitutes at their clientele's beck and call. The theaters would only work to clean themselves up when they began to yearn for the respect of other, less risqué shows; the result of which was losing the client base that they had garnered from the smut shows and eventually closing their doors for good (Zeidman 1967). In spite of all of these things, or perhaps in spite of itself, burlesque both grew and flourished as a working-class form of entertainment.

Some of the things to happen to burlesque after its displacement from the legitimate stage were not as dirty and degrading as what happened with the turkey and honky-tonk shows. One of the things to emerge from the break in burlesque that carried over the traditions of embracing female sexuality and female sexual empowerment was the pin-up genre. It came about as another way for the "theatrical identities" of these women to control the presentation and consumption of their own sexuality to those both within and outside of the theatrical world (Buszek 2006). This was an even greater blurring of the lines between the stage identity and public presentation of these women.

> [T]he nineteenth-century burlesque pin-up left a legacy for the genre in the acknowledgement and performance of her own power for agency on many different levels. Representing its beautiful/beautified subjects as not only self-aware sexual and professional beings, but beings whose identities were self-constructed, self-controlled, and ever-changing, the pin-up both represented and marked as desirable a spectrum of female identities possible between the period's established poles of acceptable 'feminine' behavior. [T]he burlesque pin-up had the power not only to image and

> provoke desire but […] to change the rigid terms by which desire had been framed in the industrial world (Buszek 2006).

This change marked the real beginning of burlesque's association with popular culture. It marked a change that took its affect on early feminist thinkers and the women's suffrage movement (Buszek 2006).

During this time, just predating the turn of the century, burlesque in North America even managed to penetrate the Canadian border with the first Canadian burlesque show taking place in Montreal. However, at the turn of the century, the original art form was all but completely lost. "It was quite a confused and horny and tawdry era in which the first burlesque shows took shape, side by side with variety entertainment. But while variety became vaudeville and aligned itself with talent, burlesque became itself and aligned itself with dirt (Zeidman 1967)."

After taking these deep rooted blows, at the turn of the century, burlesque needed to take a much needed time out to regroup. The previously illegitimate honky-tonks, now partially legitimized burlesque shows were no longer fly by the seat of your pants operations; they were established and fought to keep themselves that way. They began to create alliances between themselves and their competitors as a way of securing their spot in the burlesque spotlight. Since they had once been the "turkey shows" that transformed and revolutionized the face of burlesque by being the best new gimmick on the block, the alliance of all of the companies would help to block out any new shows that might try to take burlesque another step further for a quick profit. While the alliances did not immediately improve the shows, they did improve the more commercial aspects of the business. In the early twentieth century, when the production companies

had become large enough to do a metropolitan circuit, traveling burlesque troupes emerged and were referred to as either “wheel” or “circuit” shows (Goldwyn 2006, Zeidman 1967).

Originally, all of the owners and managers united under the banner of the Travelling Variety Managers’ Association but burlesque still had many internal problems and this did not last for long. Two different circuits quickly emerged, the Western Wheel (or Empire Circuit) and the Eastern Wheel (or Columbia Wheel) and the rivalry between the two was just as quickly established. While the Western Wheel found the lack of adequate railroad transportation an overwhelming obstacle for the traveling companies, the Eastern Wheel thrived and helped to give dignity and legitimacy to burlesque. The Eastern Wheel soon became the standard for American burlesque (Allen 1991, Zeidman 1967).

The wheel circuits seemed to be the answer to burlesque’s troubles but there were many negative consequences to them. While the women who performed in these shows finally had stable, guaranteed jobs during the tour, the tours made burlesque stagnate--each season seemed to be a replica of the last. Because of this, fresh talent aligned with vaudevillian shows, which had become a much more lucrative career. In order to garner more attention, the burlesque circuits tried to “spice up their shows”. Here, the wheels were helping to cause yet another split in the development of burlesque. While the Eastern Wheel dirtied the show in a reserved and almost shame-filled way, the Western Wheel did it unapologetically as a way of continuing the lucrative business tactics of the

late nineteenth century (Zeidman 1967). This “dirtying” of the show resulted in a wave of massive censorship, and subsequently, raids.

In 1910, the Eastern Wheel title was dropped permanently and became institutionalized as the Columbia Wheel after the Columbia Amusement Company, a long established company, opened a special theater solely for burlesque to act as headquarters for the Wheel. This theater gave the female performers the first real stability they had ever had. Instead of having to travel in order to have a steady paycheck, they could now stay put, and while the money generated for the performers was not much more, the benefit of steady, non-traveling work stood out. During this time, the Western, Empire Wheel which had been flourishing began its decline. This was because of a lack of new blood moving in to support the circuit as the original support structure aged out of the business.

> Its [Western Wheel] rawness was a perpetual reminder that burlesque was still burlesque, a leering rebuttal to Columbia’s vaunted posture of decency. And as long as Empire shows were successfully competitive, Columbia managers had to dirty their shows if they were to thrive (Zeidman 1967).

By March of 1913, the Western Circuit came to a halt, being absorbed by the Columbia Wheel after the last remaining backer for the circuit jumped ship and took up with the Columbia Amusement Company. While the Western Wheel was absorbed by the company, it still remained an organization with only the membership for those who chose to remain a part of it shifting. Once the shift in ownership took place, the Columbia Company owned the most prosperous shows on both wheels, and a burlesque monopoly was born (Zeidman 1967).

The death of the Empire marked another major change in burlesque. Columbia Wheel, which had always struggled to keep up with the risqué Western Wheel, was then free to clean up its act and pack away the smut; however, that is not what happened. Columbia Wheel managed to make a clean image for itself and fool many people into believing that its outer appearance was indicative of a cleaner show inside and out, but in reality it was managing to appear clean while still profiting from the dirtier aspects of the business that no matter how hard they tried, they never could seem to abolish. Columbia's stranglehold on burlesque cleaned the art form up so much, if even topically, that by the 1920's even the censors were supporting its entertainment value for both men and women (Allen 1991, Zeidman 1967). As quickly as burlesque had managed to claw its way back to being recognized as a legitimate theatrical display, it slipped away. By 1927 the Eastern Wheel was dead, and with it, any hope for the continued tradition of "clean" burlesque. This death was mainly the work of two factors, movies and strip shows.

During the turn of the century, vaudeville and burlesque were closely linked appearing together in the same shows. With the emergence of movies as a retreat for the depression era Americans, burlesque stayed on the street as a more risqué form of entertainment while vaudeville became legitimized by moving to the big screen. People were drawn to the newness of movies and their birth helped thin out burlesque's already dwindling crowds (Allen 1991).

After this separation, in the early 1920's, the striptease was introduced. The striptease, in its early phases, was mainly tame—a woman undressing

behind a curtain with only the illusion of nudity being portrayed with the audience. This tease quickly became the show until soon; everything else in the show was merely padding for the stripping (Allen 1991). This spawned the 1920's major policing of appropriate content for the public on burlesque stages. Many companies closed their doors for good. Others took temporary breaks to try to rework their shows and were met with the same problems upon reopening their doors. These actions helped contribute to burlesque's decline through the early twentieth century. Once the word "burlesque" was outlawed in New York, these establishments moved into the nightclub era and burlesque all but completely died out (Goldwyn 2006).

The Rise and Fall of the Burlesque Queen: 20th Century

> Like many of my female peers, I was raised in the wake of women's lib, schooled to be independent and to downplay my sexuality in order to be taken seriously. In our post-feminist society, many women question whether we really have to choose one role at the expense of the other. In the early twentieth century, women went to burlesque shows to discover the trade secrets of the stripteasers; and now, almost a century later, there lingers for many women a strong attraction to the burlesque queen persona of self-aware sexuality.
> - Liz Goldwyn, 2006

The first woman to garner the title of being a "Burlesque Queen" was May Howard. She left home at a young age in the late 1800s to go into the Rentz-Stanley shows, a well established group, in New York. After a one year period as a leading woman in a newer troupe, Bob Manchester's Night Owls, Howard formed her own company of which, of course, she was the star. During this time period, the term "burlesque queen" became synonymous with May Howard and

she completely embraced it. She fought “to establish a standard of beauty by declaring that she would not engage any girl who weighed less than one hundred and fifty pounds” (Sobel 1956). She had many brushes with the law and was considered a pioneer in the world of burlesque and the stage in general.

Two of the most infamous burlesque queens of the 1900s were actually sisters, Betty and Dian Rowland. Though very different in their performances, these sisters revolutionized the stage with their moves. Betty “Ball of Fire” Rowland’s performances were characterized by ballet moves incorporated with her striptease and she retired after 30 years in the burlesque world. Betty gained notoriety for suing a movie production company for using her stage name in the title of a movie. Dian “Society’s Sweetheart” Rowland suffered from a heart condition that forced her performances to be more graceful and sensual than her sister’s, her fame peaked during World War II. She died from her heart condition while on the road. A third Rowland sister, Rozell “The Golden Girl,” was also a burlesque star who got married during a tour and cut her fame short of queen status (Goldwyn 2006).

The type of tragic end that Dian Rowland came to was not all too uncommon for burlesque queens. The working conditions were terrible, the hours were long and they would often work without breaks. They were revered by their fans and often shamed by their families and the outside public. Some died from exhaustion; others struggled with their burlesquing identity and committed suicide.

Zorita “The Lady and Her Snakes” was another very infamous burlesque queen who found her rise at the end of the era. Zorita garnered a reputation as

an “out” lesbian in the 1930s which made her notorious to both the patrons of her performances and the other starlets. She also became notorious for her performances with live snakes. She became famous during a struggling time for the burlesque. She found creative ways of getting around the police presence during her performances. She created custom made G strings with tufts of fur that she died to match her own hair color and fashioned into faux pubic hair. Every time that she was charged with flashing, whether she had been or not, she argued that the officers had only been misled by her ingenuity (Goldwyn 2006). In the 1950s Zorita was making around $1,800 a week.

These women were all challenging social norms of the time through their burlesquing world. They were using burlesque as a stage for their voices to be heard on, some deliberately while others made waves in quieter, less obvious ways but each of them left their mark on the dying burlesque stage.

Neo-Burlesque

> Welcome to the world of neo-burlesque, where bump and grind comes with pop-culture jokes and irony is par for the course.
> -Amy Sohn, 2004

In the early 1990’s ironic burlesque re-emerged for reasons that are both understudied and debated. In her article “Teasy Does It”, Amy Sohn traces the re-popularization of burlesque to the 1993 opening of New York’s Blue Angel Exotic Cabaret. It has since spread across America from the east to west coast and permeated the globe. There are burlesque conventions across the United States including Tease-O-Rama, The Great Boston Burlesque Exposition, and

the New York Burlesque Festival. There is a Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas, Nevada and an annual Miss Exotic World Pageant that the Hall of Fame puts on. There are Burlesquersize videos and burlesque dance classes offered from San Francisco to Chicago to New York. It has become a cultural phenomenon gaining cult notoriety.

Women wanting to become involved in the revival of this art form need not reside in a major coastal city or a major city at all; burlesque has been and continues to sweep the nation. As it was in its conception, burlesque has been open to interpretation and the wide variety of arenas in which it is presently performed garners no exception. Despite the many differences in the ways in which troupes choose to present their brand of neo-burlesque, one resounding theme remains unchanged—these women are in control of their sexuality and the freedom that they have to express and expose it.

The modern-day cultural understanding of burlesque remains tied in with its close cousin, the strip show. While the original art form of burlesque had changed and then faded, the strip show became an American institution and became synonymous with burlesque. With nothing else around to contest its use of the title, it eventually overcame the history of the word.

Despite the possible differences, some scholars and feminist thinkers believe that women on stage removing their clothing and displaying both their bodies and sexuality for the possible consumption of the ‘male gaze,’ for whatever motivations, is against feminist ideals (Clark 1983, MacKinnon 1984). They see the identity of being a burlesquer and being a feminist in clear

opposition to one another and that they cannot be negotiated within the same individual.

The Feminist and the Burlesque Queen

> It has been a simple task for women to describe and criticize negative aspects of sexuality as it has been socially constructed in sexist society. It has been a far more difficult task for women to envision new sexual paradigms, to change the norms of sexuality.
> -bell hooks, 1984

Liberal Feminism: A Position of Support

Liberal feminism expresses an understanding that the social world can be evaluated outside of subjective value. It relies heavily on being able to distinguish the facts of the experience from the values that are placed upon the experience. It holds that the individual is distinguished from the society and the society's values; that the individual's liberties can and should exist in a protected private sphere. Liberal feminism views sexuality as one of the things that exists outside of governmental control, within the private sphere (Berger et. al 1991). Liberal feminists differentiate between erotica and pornography and what they mean to the women who are involved. "[E]rotica involves images or depictions of 'mutually pleasurable, sexual expression' between equal and consenting subjects; it celebrates the body and contains an aesthetic or affectionate component. Pornography, on the other hand, treats the body as an object to be controlled or dominated; it portrays sex that is violent, degrading, or dehumanizing (Berger et.

al 1991).” Clearly these things are set apart with burlesque entering the discourse under the heading of “erotica”.

Shifting Definitons

Burlesque is a celebration of the female form; a display of femininity, sexuality, wit, and social consciousness. In the late nineteenth-century and on into the early twentieth century, burlesque moved away from the social irony that had once been a staple of the art form. Lydia Thompson herself wrote about what she knew as burlesque having retired from the stage (Allen 1967). It was during this time period that what had become the working-class burlesque moved into the modern-day stripper. For the greatest part of the twentieth century’s association with burlesque this remained the norm. This is where modern day understandings of burlesque emerged, not from the original art form, but from what it had evolved into and was bound to move away from. And while burlesque has de-evolved some, the popular culture’s understanding of what it means has not. It still remains a vastly misunderstood and misrepresented art form.

All the World’s a Stage

In Goffman’s (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he posits that people perform to an audience and that the presentation of their self changes with both the audience and the stage. The performer has both a front stage and a back stage. The front stage is what the performer chooses to show to the audience, what parts of themselves they choose to exhibit for the audience

to consume. The back stage consists of all of the hidden things about the performer that the performer does not allow the audience to see.

Goffman argues that all individuals follow this pattern throughout their day to day lives. For performers on the literal stage, this is even truer. They experience both the physical front and back stage as well as the psychological front and back stage. As a performer they have a set list of exhibited characteristics, a possible audience consumption list, things that the performer wants to and will allow the audience to see. Their day to day self is their back stage when their performing self is on the physical front stage.

Women and Desire

It is impossible to separate female identity from expressions of societal beauty. It is intrinsic to women and their entire way of life. As very young girls, females are rewarded more on their appearance, both physical and emotional, than on their accomplishments. Starting in adolescence, women are inundated with images of society's ideal woman and taught to compare themselves with it. Despite all of the opportunities that women are provided with in the post-women's suffrage movement world, a woman's power is still entirely wrapped into her feminine identity. Women, both figuratively and literally, beat themselves up striving for the ideal (Young-Eisendrath 1999).

The Subversive Performance as Political Protest

For some, the idea of a cultural performance being used as a voice for a political platform seems a stretch. Resolving oneself to the idea that that cultural performance could be burlesque, which involves exposure of the body to an audience, and that the platform could be feminist politics, which often involves disputes over the objectification of the body, is an even harder. In his discussion of primary frameworks and particularly the "astounding complex", Goffman (1974) reflects on this resolution as a result of the box that society traps itself in, which hinders its assessment of various events. "[I]n our society the very significant assumption is generally made that all events—without exception—can be contained and managed within the conventional system of beliefs (Goffman 1974)." Within the "conventional system of beliefs," it is not possible that burlesque successfully operates as a form of risqué entertainment and as a form of feminist protest because of the conventional beliefs of feminists on displays of the female form and because of the conventional beliefs about the lewd nature of burlesque; however, Goffman is not the only one who argues for an open mind.

In *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*, Rupp and Taylor argued for a broader definition of social movement tactics after analyzing drag performances as a form of protest. They believed that an understanding of social movement tactics that allowed for cultural form to be used for political purposes should be developed in order to include non-traditional forms of protest. They created a model with which to analyze a cultural performance, such as burlesque, and set it apart as political.

The three criteria that comprised Rupp and Taylor's model included *contestation*, *intentionality*, *and collective identity*. The first of these refers to the degree to which the performance is "a site of *contestation* where symbols are forced, negotiated, and debated by groups with different and competing interest" (Rupp and Taylor 2003). *Intentionality* is the calculated use of cultural forms of entertainment as a medium for a political stage. Finally, deliberate acts of cultural protest are distinct because of the groups of actors who use the culture as a stage for *collective identity* (Rupp and Taylor 2003). While there are some differences in the ways that drag shows and burlesque follow this model, they both follow it.

Contestation refers to the way in which the group contests the way that certain symbols are used normally. They negotiate the use of these symbols to serve their own purposes. In order to be successful, they must convince their audience to engage in their use of the symbols which sometimes is quite the challenge.

> *Contestation* suggests that the discourse conveyed by a cultural performance subverts rather than maintains dominant relations of power. In reality, evaluating the public displays of social movement culture is more complicated than determining whether they are hegemonic or oppositional, since protest groups typically mobilize by drawing upon identities, practices, and symbols that are already meaningful from the standpoint of dominant ideologies and frameworks (Rupp and Taylor 2003).

These *contestations* are found throughout neo-burlesque performances.

Intentionality is a key component of the political cultural performance. "While a performance can arguably be political even without conscious intention or awareness on the part of the actors, it is useful to distinguish performances on

the basis of intentionality, because doing so reveals what both the performers and audience interpret as political about the performance (Rupp and Taylor 2003)." While the mere act of being on the stage as the non-standard forms of beauty that they are is a political statement, the intentional and strategic use of neo-burlesque as a platform for blatant political messages is far more interesting to analyze.

Finally, *collective identity* is forged by having a "shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests and solidarity" (quoted in Rupp and Taylor 2003). Performance studies literature suggests that cultural displays have the potential to construct collective identity both through internal and external means. Internally, things are defined and structured by the group and shared goals and definitions. Once laid out, these become the basis for collective identity since they are the agreed upon and shared beliefs of the members. Externally, things are defined and structured "through the formation of transcendent collective identities that redefine the meaning of community" (Rupp and Taylor 2003).

Rupp and Taylor's model was built as a way of analyzing drag performances and while there are many differences between drag shows and burlesque shows, the model can be used to argue that burlesque, too, can and does operate as a means/form of social protest.

Methods

With Rupp and Taylor's framework in mind, I attended six public performances by the Columbia, Missouri queer/feminist neo-burlesque troupe, Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue, over a 17 month period. I analyzed the burlesque performances I saw in terms of Rupp and Taylor's model. At one show I distributed an optional three question survey to the audience members in order to assess how successfully the troupe's use of a cultural performance as a means of social protest was being received by the audience.

Setting the Scene

The performances that I attended took place in three different venues in the Columbia, Missouri area. One performance was at the opening night party for a local documentary film festival, two performances were at a local gay club, and three performances were at a local music venue.

The film festival party was in a long, narrow studio lit only by strings of white Christmas lights. There was a bar on the left side of the room and squared-off columns intermittently throughout the room. At the end of the room opposite the entrance, there was a corner sectioned off as a stage with a DJ table set up stage right. The troupe performed a short set of four numbers with the DJ spinning their music to a crowded room, approximately 200 people. There were no chairs or tables, the crowd danced and mingled around haphazardly. Those in attendance ranged in ages, ethnicities, and genders.

The local gay club generally plays host to drag queen and drag king shows on a weekly basis and occasionally plays host to a burlesque show as

well. In the club there is a large bar immediately to the right and a large two foot tall stage on the right wall with two stair step smaller stages coming off of the front of the larger stage. There is a dance area in front of the stage which, for the performances, is covered with tables and chairs. After the show, they are removed so that the audience members can dance. On the wall opposite the entrance there is a screen where the performance is broadcast so that all in attendance can be sure to see. The audience of the club ranges in all categories, as well, with the majority appearing to be younger than 35 with slightly more women. Both performances that I attended there were well attended with the crowds being larger than two hundred people.

Finally, the local music venue is dramatically different from the previously mentioned venues because it is typically used to play host to notable music acts that pass through the area and a burlesque show is slightly different in its presentation, and because of the size of the audiences that follow the kinds of acts they generally host, the entire structure is quite large. The stage in this venue is large, the most separated from the audience of all of the venues. There is a very large bar on the back wall with a large balcony above it and a second bar upstairs. There is DJ booth centered a few feet in front of the bar with tables and chairs scattered around it leading all the way up to the stage. In both the gay club and the music venue the troupe performed a full set list, approximately fifteen numbers, ranging from full group numbers down to solos. A typical crowd for these shows is anywhere between one and two hundred people. It was at the music venue that I distributed my questionnaire to the audience.

Glitter Over Fascism

> [T]he fact that she's wearing bib overalls does not mean she's a lesbian. The fact that she doesn't shave her legs does not mean she's a feminist. The fact that she's wearing panty hose does not mean she's a housewife. The fact that she's decorated with makeup and jewelry does not mean she's 'cheap' or some other version of slut. The fact that she's wearing high heels does not mean she wants men to look at her legs. Being alert to the many, varied ways that women can dress and be and act ensures that we do not automatically see a woman's expression of herself as a sign of a pat identity according to patriarchal rules.
> -Polly Young-Eisendrath, 1999

Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue (LMBQR) is a queer/feminist neo-burlesque troupe that emerged in the Midwest in late 2005. They consist of students, educators, and activists. There are seven main performers and two emcees in the group, as well as many guest performers who are considered part of the Little Mama's family. Little Mama's, while remaining true to the mission of burlesque, presents a much different show than most would believe could be associated with burlesque. In the beginning, LMBQR was followed mainly by their friends and loved ones but quickly gained notoriety in their little college town. The troupe's mission statement, laid out in their first meeting, says that

> Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue is dedicated to sizzling subversive performance that incorporates social justice ideals. Our mission is to challenge dominant paradigms of sizism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and all the other –isms that interlock to privilege some while oppressing others. We are sexy activists, brazen intellectuals, and passionate radicals who strive to create a challenging dialogue between and among the audience and ourselves. We believe in glitter over fascism.
> - Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue, 2005.

Little Mama's reads this mission statement at the start of every show. By framing their show with it, they help to ensure that there are no misconceptions about their intention as performers and activists.

These performers, mainly women, are very successfully negotiating both their activist and sexual identities on the stage. The troupe ranges in ages, sizes, sexual identities, occupations, and backgrounds. The majority of the Little Mama's shows are benefits to aid the queer community through different organizations. Their bag of numbers covers a wide variety of topics including the war in Iraq, George W. Bush, monogamy, abortion rights, body image, queer identity, sexual health, masturbation, healthcare policies, finding yourself, and just down right sexy dancing. Liberal politics are their message and burlesque merely their medium.

Naked Activism

> My actions are my only true belongings.
> I cannot escape the consequences
> of my actions.
> My actions are the ground
> on which I stand.
> -Buddha, more than 2500 years ago.

As lined out in their mission statement, LMBQR is a social justice activist group. They put these messages at the forefront of all that they do. They perform many numbers that have to do with current issues plaguing the world. One of their followers' favorite numbers is an anti-war piece to "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" by Chicago. It is important to note that there is no

removal of clothing in this number. The focus is the on the irony and wit behind the message. Each member of the troupe is dressed as a different personality: a construction worker, a high powered business woman, a hipster, a reporter, etc, who are so consumed in their own lives that they only notice others when they bump into one another on the street. In the background there is a clock with the years since the invasion of Iraq around the face. The performers all stop and point at the clock when the song says “Does anybody really know what time it is? Does anyone really care” Periodically their dance is interrupted with “news reports,” listing statistics such as the number of casualties since the beginning of the war, and commercials for material things such as the Hummer H20 and Coca-Cola. The number ends with two troupe members going back to pick up the clock and bringing it to the forefront of the stage so that the audience can clearly read it. They then turn it around to reveal the true message of the piece, “It’s Time To End The War.” They then exit the stage to thunderous applause.

Aspects of Rupp and Taylor’s model can be clearly seen operating within this number. *Contestation* of cultural symbols is seen in how they make use of the song by Chicago to discuss it being time to end the war and use familiar commercial advertisements intermittently throughout the number to draw attention to the things that are distracting the public from the horrific nature of the United States’ presence in the Middle East, as well as making a commentary on consumerism. This number is very calculated and *intentional* in its delivery. *Collective Identity* can also been seen here in that it is a message that has been agreed upon by the entire troupe to distribute to an audience who, based on their

reaction of applause, agrees with the troupe's message and then experiences a shared identity with the troupe because of the shared beliefs.

Body Image

In one number, Suis Je Normal (Am I Normal?), the women are fingering through popular women's magazine, such as Marie Clair, Glamour, Cosmopolitan, etc, and then analyzing the way that their own bodies look in relation to the other women on the stage. After some body positive removal of clothing, the performers begin to rip the pages of the magazines out and throw the crumpled pieces on the ground.

Here, the troupe members are clearly *contesting* mainstream interpretations of beauty and asking their audience to agree with them that these cultural misrepresentations of mainstream beauty are trash. They are engaging in a very *intentional* conversation with the audience. They are saying that they are beautiful exactly as they are; not in comparison, but in contrast, to every other beautiful woman around them and that this is true for all women. They are arguing that beauty is allowed to take more than one standardized form. "Only by opposing appearance standards in our own talk and self-talk can we gradually change the cultural conversations and symbols (Young-Eisendrath 1999)." This is a mission that is at the forefront of this troupe.

The number ends with the troupe members pulling lipstick from their bras and drawing hearts on their own bodies as well as the bodies of the other women around them as a way of hammering home the point: "Love Your Body."

Reproductive Health

Another number that this troupe has become known for is their pro-choice number to “Your Mangled Heart” by The Gossip. Each woman on stage represents her own issue, such as childcare, healthcare, and “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policies of the military, in conjunction with her pro-choice beliefs. One performer sits stage right wearing a George W. Bush mask. Each woman presents her issue and is quickly rebuffed by the mock Bush. They then gang up on him and remove him from the stage before starting their own modernized version of a fan dance with “Keep Abortion Legal” signs.

While the troupe members remove their clothing down to pasties and panties, there is no dispute over what is at the heart of this number. They believe in a woman’s right to choice over her own body and they are concerned about the United State’s current administrations’ position on the issue. The almost complete removal of their clothing is also, as always with this troupe, another message about women having control over their bodies and not just when it comes to medical decisions. “Your Mangled Heart” is a very empowering and beautiful number.

In this number we can see the *intentional* use of burlesque for spreading the troupe’s *collective* pro-choice message. While, as previously mentioned, some numbers with political messages do not incorporate removal of clothing and instead rest on the power of the message, the pro-choice number latches onto the discussion of the body that plays out in the abortion debate, “My Body, My Choice”. Using the sexual nature of burlesque combined with the strong

political commentary that they are known for shows that they are *intentionally* using burlesque as a medium for their political soapbox. Much like the abortion debate, the troupe members are also arguing that they can use burlesque for these means and are asking their audience to entertain that idea, oftentimes by *contesting* what they understand of burlesque.

Gender Bending and Boylesque

In the number “Soccer Practice,” a skit previously made infamous on YouTube by the Gay Pimp, two members of the troupe, who engage in boylesque—a form of burlesque that is either performed by male performers or female performers who identify masculinely on the stage, come on the stage to an up-tempo song about the homoeroticism in male pastimes, such as sports. One of the performers represents the stereotypical sports centered male while the other represents the male who engages in sports fully seeing and embracing the homoeroticism.

The first of these appears completely naïve to the advances of their fellow sports fan. This can be seen in dialogue between the two characters “Hey dude I was thinking we could go do something dirty”. The stereotypical male answers with “well I don't know man, I like to do manly things. You know just manly guys, doin’ manly things, you know what I mean?” The more aggressive of the two then comes back with “listen I like to do manly things too, but I like, baby, to do them with you. I was thinking we could go do something dirty, yeah”.

This entire display boils over into full hilarity by the time the performers are running around stage, track pants around their ankles, spraying each other down with water from their water bottles and snapping their towels at one another's butts. The statement about sexuality is clear. This number speaks both to people well versed in gender politicking and queer identity and to those who are not, but have been privy to this kind of "masculine" behavior. It makes a joke about masculinity that speaks to many people regardless of the fact that two genetic women are the ones performing it. One might argue that it is more interesting because of this. By engaging masculinely, they are showing that this is something that is understood by males as "normal male's" behavior, despite seeming incredibly homoerotic to many, and that to identify masculinely one must be able to negotiate this kind of behavior.

While this is a much less political number, *contestation* is still operating in the identity of the performers. The performers, much like what can be seen in Rupp and Taylor's argument about drag queens, is asking the audience to contest common understandings of gender and sexuality. There are also *contestations* about masculinity in this number as seen through the male display by biological females.

Queer Identity

One of the most powerful performances seen in shows by Little Mama's comes from a solo number to the song "Miserable" by the band Lit. On the stage

there are three large vertical signs: a blue sign with a male symbol stage left, a pink sign with a female symbol stage right, and a white sign with a huge question mark stating “both/and” representing gender queer that hangs center stage, with chairs under each that hold changes of wardrobe. The female performer comes out dressed in traditionally male attire, a button up shirt and slacks and sings along with the song. Singing the words “I love things that we should fear, I’m not afraid of being here,” the performer vigorously points to the white sign and sheds her male attire.

She moves to stage right to the female sign and the traditionally feminine black dress that hangs on the chair beneath it. As she changes, she makes a joke of showing her red underwear that say “feminist” across the crotch, to thunderous applause, and then proceeds to skip femininely across the stage. She then moves from sign to sign singing along with the words.

First stop is the male sign where she sings “you make me come” while making air humping motions. Then she moves to the gender queer sign as she sings “you make me complete” and waves her arms around the sign showcasing it. Finally, she moves to the female sign while giving a thumb down sign in the air sings “you make me completely miserable”. Then she moves to the only untouched chair left on stage, the gender queer chair. She quickly puts on worn-in jeans and removes the dress. She stands on the chair waving her new shirt like a banner “Gender queer” is all it says.

After completing the outfit she moves on to fulfill the message of her number. She moves back to the female sign as she repeats the chorus “you

make me come, you make me complete, you make me completely miserable" and shreds the sign throwing bits of it all over the stage. Then she moves to the male sign and almost violently, but more appropriate angrily, shreds it while jumping around on stage. In her final act she removes the gender queer sign and drapes it over her shoulders like a shawl, symbolically and physically embracing her self—who ever that self may be.

Contestation is easily seen in this solo number through the gender identity of the performer. There is also *intentionality* at work in this number; by using the burlesque vehicle as a means to discuss issues such as gender identity. This number is also so powerful because it shows the confusion that even the individual can go through during gender identity construction.

Hot and Sweaty on the Campaign Trail

One of Little Mama's Burly-Q's most recently debuted numbers includes a commentary on the current race for President of the United States of America. Obviously liberal in their pursuits, the statement the troupe delivers is one both in support of Barack Obama and in question of what will happen once all the chips fall in his favor.

The number has two main performers both in white shirts that say "I Vote" with a poster of Obama stage left and signs in their hands that say "Obama '08", the song playing is "Follow Through" by Gavin Degraw. The words start "Oh, this is the start of something good, wouldn't you agree?" and they sing along clutching their signs and staring off wistfully into the stage lights. When the line

“And we can build through this destruction, as we are standing on our feet…” is said, two secondary performers, at the corners of the stage, lift up a banner that says “Bush=Destruction” and the two original performers rip through it.

Through the chorus the performers hold up signs saying “HOPE” and “CHANGE”. When the last three lines of the chorus are sang “So, since you want to be with me, you'll have to follow through with every word you say” the performers take turns holding up a variety of different signs that say an issue (education, partner benefits, environment) and the back of the sign says “Follow Through,” which they flip to when the words are sang. While one performer is at center stage showcasing the issue that causes them to support Barack Obama, the other performer sings the song to the poster of Obama.

During the last two lines of the song, which is the same as the first only slower and more melodramatic, “Oh, this is the start of something good, don't you agree?” the performers hold up one more sign. This time it is a sign of hope for the future—“Obama ‘12”. They are not blindly supporting a candidate they are speaking to the heart of the matter. The truth of what happens during campaign season is that if you are able to find a candidate whose position you support and they manage to make it to the White House, often what they preached for months on the trail goes quickly out the window. This troupe is simply reminding their audience that they believe Obama is the hope of the future but only if Obama the President of the United States stays true to the word of Obama the candidate for President of the United States.

This is another number that clearly follows the Rupp and Taylor model, exhibiting *contestation*, *intentionality*, and *collective identity*. *Contestation* can be seen through the use of a mainstream love song as a message to a presidential nominee. Their use of signs, especially those showing current and future support for Obama is *intentionally* using the burlesque stage as a political stage. This number also shows *collective identity* by the troupe's endorsement of a presidential hopeful, this is another time where if the audience members agree with this message they engage in a shared identity with the performers as well.

Analysis

Rethinking Pre-conceived Notions

At one Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue show, taking place in the music venue, an optional three question questionnaire was passed out to the audience members assessing their experiences with burlesque. The questionnaire asked about their previous experiences and notions of burlesque as well as their feelings toward burlesque after watching the Little Mama's show [see Appendix A].

By asking the participants about their previous experiences with burlesque I hoped to assess how immersed in the culture of burlesque one was in order to have context for the responses that followed. The second question asked about the respondent's feelings about burlesque prior to their first encounter so that I could determine if any changes occurred in their feelings towards burlesque after exposure to it, either then at that show or prior to that show. The final question

about their post-feelings and whether or not they had felt the previous feelings challenged or reinforced by the show was used to assess any kinds of changes or similarities in experiences.

I found that many of the responses garnered at this show, much like the performances themselves, sit well in the framework of Rupp and Taylor's model for analyzing the cultural form as a vehicle for social protest.

Contestation

Rupp and Taylor's discussion of the appearance of contestation in drag shows is applicable to the discussion of contestation's appearance in burlesque shows. They discuss drag queens' use of popular music that has one set of meanings to the modern culture and how they use both hegemonic and counter hegemonic symbols of gender and sexuality to establish the meanings that the cultural form has chosen to force upon their audience.

As discussed in the analysis of Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue numbers, burlesque performances, much like drag performances, engage in this use of redefined cultural symbols. The music that they choose is very carefully chosen and the performances that accompany them, even more so. Sometimes the song is followed along with and other times redefined, as is the case in the *Follow Through* number. The troupe members used a love song by a relatively popular pop chart artist to discuss the problems with electing government officials, even if you do support them. This is asking their audience to make a leap with them, and the audience whether they are aware of the jump or not, follow.

Contestation can also be seen in the way that identity is performed on the stage. This is seen in several ways when discussing Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue. First, it can be seen in who the individuals that comprise LMBQR are; they are everyday students and educators, there is nothing particularly show stopping about them were you to see them in their day to day attire. Many of their audience members do know them in their day to day capacity and many who do not end up stumbling across them in day to day activities after having seen them in shows--remember that many of these performers are activists in the general sense and make a presence in the community. Also on the identity front, there is the gender bending drag performances that take place at every show, calling into question the structured lines of sexual identity. Finally, there is the appearance of this troupe. These are everyday individuals, they are not all a size two with absolutely breathtaking features, they are real women and men whose presence on the stage is *contesting* cultural representations of beauty and sexiness. When these performers step on stage they are engaging their audience in the question of real beauty and who defines it.

Many respondents spoke to these forms of contestation in their questionnaire when asked about the impressions post-show, most focusing on the obvious difference in the bodies that are presented as both beautiful and sexual on the Little Mama's stage than are generally represented as beautiful and sexual in popular culture [see Appendix B for full responses].

Respondent C wrote:

> "impressed that all body types were up there without shame because of their body—I'm not that brave and I'm glad that someone does it for the rest of us. WOW!"

In this respondent's response, they recognized exactly what Little Mama's was contesting, "without shame because of their body." This respondent engaged in the troupe's use of average women's bodies as being sexual symbols, despite popular cultural notions that these women should be "ashamed" because of their bodies. Respondent C even went so far as to claim that what was taking place on the stage was "brave" and that what Little Mama's troupe members were doing was representative of what other average women feel that they could not do.

Also discussing the bodies on display, respondent F wrote:

> "The way Little Mama's takes off clothes with the variety of bodies really astounded me the 1st time I saw it."

This response made clear what about this display of bodies is "astounding". It was not that the individuals with varying body types were merely on the stage; it was that the individuals who removed their clothing on the stage consisted of a variety of body types. This type of statement gives validation to the LMBQR mission of challenging the dominant paradigm of sizism in present day culture; they are successfully doing this with their audience.

Another respondent, Respondent K, wrote:

> "Love it!
> Love the message and performance combined
> Love the celebration of real women and their bodies.
> Love exploration of current social justice oriented topics."

This respondent distinguished the message and the performance as two separate things that Little Mama's successfully brought together on the stage. Respondent K also specifically referred to the differing bodies on the stage as being a "celebration of real women." It is the qualifier of "real" that is most interesting since it seems to suggest that what is typically celebrated when it comes to women and their bodies is in opposition to reality.

Respondent N, who had seen LMBQR several times before, did not respond with the heavily favored statements about the displayed bodies; they instead discussed other issues of contestation that the burlesque performance brought to their mind.

> "I freakin' loved the performance! It (the performance) got me thinking about a lot of things—Gender norms, violence, boundaries, etc."

This response was particularly interesting because while *contestations* of beauty and gender identity are very intrinsic to what Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue aims to do, there were other issues listed that stuck out to the respondent that were presented in more underlying ways, such as violence and boundaries. This shows that Little Mama's was able to successfully make their audience challenge dominant cultural ideas besides those that are at the heart of their intentional display. It is not that a person must be exposed to Little Mama's *contestations* over and over again in order to engage in the conversation, they successfully change topics and still make an impact on the audience. Whether or not the individual walked away believing exactly in the troupe's message, is not as important as the fact that they were engaged in the conversation.

Another thing that Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue has been known among their followers to do is completely change the mind of a naysayer after they have witnessed a performance. Many audience members claim to feel some kind of "change" in them after going to shows. The following responses touch on these changes that take place due to Little Mama's *contestations*.

Respondent O reported that prior to their exposure to burlesque, they believed it to be "pretty much a strip show that was degrading". They went on to report that:

> "[a]fter my first show I felt empowered! I was amazed to see women who were not the 'ideal' body type showing no fear. Being a 'bigger' person, myself, it made me feel good about myself. I also had no idea how politically and socially conscious burlesque was. It was awesome to see gender norms being broken and people expressing their problems with our political system."

This respondent discussed the same *contestations* that many other respondents did but also mentioned that the troupe's use of the *contestation* of beauty made them feel good about who they were and empowered them. The troupe managed to successfully negotiate their sexuality and social justice ideals in such a way that it actually directly affected an audience member's feelings about themselves. They used the sexualized female form to spread a message of self-love that impacted an individual.

Much like Respondent O, Respondent Q, also directly spoke to being affected by Little Mama's shows.

> "I love how LiL Mama's incorporates social justice ideals—and how a variety of body types and gender identities are portrayed—something that mainstream 'burlesque' like the Pussycat Dolls doesn't do in the slightest. Frequently, LiL Mama's numbers bring tears to my eyes. I especially love

> seeing women who are bigger than what is considered ‘beautiful’ by society it makes me feel more pride and comfort with my own body.”

Here again, clear discussion of the *contestation* of beauty took place. Like Respondent O, this respondent felt “more pride and comfort” with their own body as a result of watching the troupe members displaying pride and comfort with their own, “average” bodies. This respondent even said that oftentimes the display that they have seen on the Little Mama’s stage has brought them to tears, meaning that they have become so emotionally connected with the troupe and their message that they actually have a physical reaction.

The *contestation* of beauty may have been picked up on most because at the forefront of burlesque performances is the removal of clothing. Most mainstream burlesque, such as those that Respondent Q mentioned, are characterized by the typical cultural representations of beauty—young, slender, and gorgeous—and so the lack of clothing simply plays out as obvious objectification of the culturally “ideal” female form. The general understanding of the sexualized female form in our society is completely wrapped up in the objectification debate, which is why so many individuals have a hard time conceding that burlesque, which is characterized by the removal of clothing, can be feminist. The shock of using average women’s sexualized bodies as a way of *contesting* cultural misrepresentations of beauty, seems to dominate the conversation surrounding LMBQR because it is the most blatant of their *contestations*..

These types of sentiments about the *contestations* that Little Mama’s ask the audience to discuss with them are reiterated over and over again in the

responses from this show and in casual conversation with anyone who has been to a Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue Show. The messages that the audience members received, including these that are at the heart of troupe's identity, are carefully constructed by the group.

Intentionality

Like the drag queens that Rupp and Taylor studied, the neo-burlesque troupe's use of strategic performance of identity and the stage as a vehicle for political beliefs speaks to the group's intention. Some social movement literature argues that emotion can be used in a calculated fashion when seeking political and cultural change (Morris 1984, Ferree 1992, Taylor 1995, Gould 2001, and Whittier 2002). Neo-burlesque is an excellent example of a form of protest that strategically uses emotions through the types of music that they use and the severity of the issues that they present.

Many respondents did not focus solely on one issue of *contestation*; many respondents saw overarching, *intentional* displays. Respondent R wrote:

> "I was invigorated by the show! It was an excellent satirical representation of our oppressive reality."

This respondent saw the troupe use of *intentional* satire as a way of entering into a conversation about the oppressive nature of modern culture. The respondent was not referring to any one particular number as having done this, but that the show, overall, operated in that way. It represented a whole, coherent statement about the state of things in the world, while being burlesque.

Another response speaking about the troupe's *intentionality* came from Respondent B:

> "I was surprised at how forcefully political and empowering the show was."

This respondent saw the show as having been "forcefully political". The *intention* of Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue was to use burlesque as a medium to spread a political activist message. While this respondent did not discuss any one particular issue that the troupe mentioned, they did see the show, as a whole, as having been very political. The respondent was surprised at the political nature of the show, but they were still able to successfully see it as such because of how the troupe negotiated their activism and the art form of burlesque.

Respondent D spoke about the effect that the gender identity *contestation* had on the show overall:

> "Queering it changes some of the power dynamic and adds irony."

It was interesting that this respondent thought that "queering" it added irony when historical burlesque was characterized by both irony and drag. However, the changes in the power dynamic and the added irony, to what arguably is already ironic, due to the gender displays was an *intentional* political statement on the part of the troupe. This respondent's response shows that the troupe was able to successfully put this message in the hands of the audience members.

Another respondent, Respondent E, took pride in what they saw at the show.

> "I love the way they mix politics with art and performance. It makes me proud to be a [Columbian], a dyke, a human being."

This respondent clearly believed that what they saw was Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue *intentionally* mixing the art form of burlesque with their political ideology.

Respondent M, who had been to burlesque shows other than Little Mama's in the past, responded by saying:

> "I suppose my feelings were reinforced [because] I had [positive] feelings to start. I think that burlesque is a fantastic way of communicating ideas."

This response was most interesting because it spoke not only about Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue's *intentionality* but also about having seen *intentionality* in previous troupe's shows. This lends itself as evidence that using burlesque as a means for *intentionally* communicating a message is not unique to Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue; this use of burlesque can be seen in other troupes.

Respondent L also saw LMBQR as using burlesque as a stage to *intentionally* talk about feminist politics.

> "Thoughts: Sexy, Fun, Awesome way to 'talk' about feminist issues. And how empowering!!!"

Since the respondent recognized that the presentation of issues was *intentional*, it follows that they felt that the subsequent empowerment that they felt was an *intentional* result as well.

Respondent N also had a comment that spoke very clearly to an understanding of Little Mama's *intentionality*:

> "The show accomplishes at least 2 things very well: it entertains and it educates. These 2 things together hold a lot of potential for aiding in struggles for social justice for all people."

There is not a more perfect response to speak to how clear Little Mama's *intentionality* is to their audience members. This respondent does not just refer to

the political agenda that takes place on their stage as a presentation of issues but as an education. This statement also makes a very bold statement of advocacy for the troupe claiming that their use of burlesque as a means of entertaining and educating holds "potential for aiding in the struggles for social justice for all people" which is the grandest of Little Mama's *intentional* hopes.

Respondent U did not really refer to the sexual aspect of the show; they instead referred to the political aspect.

> "I love the issues they tackle and how they are very comfortable challenging the conservative stereotype of women."

The art form is the medium used to project the *intentional* political message, but how well Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue was at getting that message across from within the performance is best assessed by the presence that the political message makes in an audience member's post show thoughts. These messages left a heavy impression on the respondents, in some cases heavier than sexual aspects of the show.

Yet another respondent saw the *intentional* use of burlesque as a means for discussing political ideals working very well. Respondent V responded by saying:

> "Burlesque is now a fun and entertaining way to give a message. It's genius—keep their attention with hot, talented, amazing, intelligent women and the BAM: reality."

This respondent actually referred to the technique of using the cultural entertainment form of burlesque for *intentionally* pursuing a political discourse within the performance as "genius".

Finally, Respondent W said that prior to their first burlesque show, they

> "didn't understand that [burlesque] could be counter-cultural, protest commentary and oh-so-queer. But this [show] met and more so my ideas that it can have political content—and oh yes, still be sooo sexy!"

After seeing a Little Mama's show, this respondent changed their mind about what burlesque was. Little Mama's *intentional* use of burlesque as a political stage made them realize that a burlesque show could successfully use politics and sex to create a very entertaining display that they described with the phrase "counter-cultural, protest commentary," yet another bold statement about what some would at face value call a "strip show".

There were many statements made by the respondents that lend themselves as evidence of Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue's successful, *intentional* use of burlesque as an arena to engage in a political discourse. It is not just that the political messages have been *intentionally* put out by the troupe, but the far more important thing is that the *intentionality* clearly came across to the audience members and that they were able to engage in the conversation with the troupe.

Collective Identity

As has been clearly expressed in many of the previous survey responses, Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue is very good at negotiating their collective identity. More than that, however, their collective identity is also discussed in some responses as being indicative of the whole of neo-burlesque, with the noted exception of "mainstream" burlesque as aligned by one respondent with the Pussycat Dolls. Beyond expressing the collective identity of the troupe and neo-

burlesque as a whole, Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue also penetrated into their audience to form a shared collective identity with those in attendance.

These feelings of expressing a shared identity are best expressed in the post-show response of Respondent J who had never been to any kind of burlesque show previously:

> "The show reminded me that we can take ownership of a message vehicle and shape it however we want. I was surprised by the show, but it made me feel happy, liberated, empowered."

This response is a beautiful statement of how Little Mama's uses burlesque as a platform for their political beliefs. The respondent used the term "we" in this statement, this showed that they felt a collective bond with the troupe over the idea of taking "ownership of a message vehicle" and transforming it to serve your needs. The respondent went on to say that they felt "liberated" and "empowered" which was a collective feeling being shared between those in the audience and the performers on the stage, it was that feeling in themselves that drove the troupe members to want to expose others to it. Feeling that way was another reason that the troupe was so successful at projecting the feeling onto others, without a deep belief in that what they were doing was a successful negotiation of sex and politics, they could not convince others that it was.

Over Arching Trends

The trends that were observed in the responses were very interesting. After reviewing the responses several times, a pattern emerged from the data. When looking at the overall questionnaire, many respondents tended to answer

in one of two ways: 1. Audience members who reported having a history of burlesque—either by attending shows, performing in shows or historical knowledge of burlesque—were not surprised by what they saw on the Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue stage and 2. If their initial understanding of burlesque somehow tied in with the strip show or they had never seen any kind of burlesque show before—these two things often appeared together—they found themselves surprised and excited by what they saw on the Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue stage. Further research would need to be conducted to decipher how meaningful these trends are.

Tying Up Loose Ends

A Mirror or a Distortion: LMBQR vs. Historical Burlesque

After analyzing the history of burlesque and a modern day queer/ feminist neo-burlesque troupe, many similarities and difference can be observed. While historical burlesque was characterized by irony and wit, it was not necessarily as blatantly political as what was seen in the Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue shows. However, some of the more ingrained contestations are the same for both historical burlesque and LMBQR.

Little Mama's boldly contested cultural conceptions of beauty by offering the audience an array of sexualized bodies and also numbers that were specifically about being in love with all of the various bodies. May Howard, the first burlesque queen also contested these conceptions by trying to change the common standard of beauty; this was seen when she instituted a minimum

weight policy on the women that she employed in her company (Sobel 1956). While the method for these contestations differs, these two things are not far removed from each other. When the women of Little Mama's took the stage, this contestation was immediately apparent and when the women of May Howard's company took the stage, it was apparent as well. Whether or not it was as blatant as LMBQR is able to be, it is still a political statement.

Originally, burlesque was characterized more by play type acting, and then it moved into dance (Sobel 1956). The dancing, in the beginning, was often as innocent as ballet and did not move into the more risqué dancing that it was characterized by for so long until the Western Wheel's popularity at the start of the twentieth century. While Little Mama's and neo-burlesque, in general, are known for risqué dancing, what they manage to produce is the merger of pre and post turn of the century burlesque—with irony, intelligence, and sex to spare. Little Mama's and neo-burlesque may differ in their presentations but they seem to have evolved as a way to bridge the gap between the origin of burlesque, which was wrapped up in the wit, and the strip show, which was wrapped up in the body.

While some parallels can be drawn between historical burlesque and LMBQR, there are glaring differences. Historical burlesque, while having inherent statements of social justice—such as May Howard and Zorita who were able to have successful careers and businesses without needing a man to help them, which was very rare for women in their times—did not pack the same social justice punch of what takes place on the Little Mama's stage. Many neo-

burlesque troupes showcase a variety of bodies and gender presentations like Little Mama's but far fewer are as politically forceful with their contestations; this makes Little Mama's stand out in the crowd, but it does make them stand apart.

Another difference is how the use of music has become part of the showcase, very intentionally chosen to convey certain messages. In historical burlesque, the performers relied on their bodies to convey their messages and there was less emphasis on the music and what message it was lending to the scene (Allen 1991, Sobel 1956, Zeidman 1967). While there is a major emphasis on the music chosen for neo-burlesque performances in general, Little Mama's is very intentional in the music that they use and that it lends itself to an activist's message. Part of these differences may be due to the importance that has long been placed on the lyrics of various subcultures' music, such as the hymns of the slaves, the folk music of the hippies, and, now, the activist voice of a queer/ feminist neo-burlesque troupe. Music is used to speak to people, and Little Mama's incorporates it with a host of other communication methods to form well crafted statements about social issues.

The major difference that exists between historical burlesque and neo-burlesque and specifically, LMBQR, has been touched on in several areas of this paper is less of a discussion about differences and is more of a discussion about evolution. Neo-burlesque is able to accomplish what the first era of burlesque never did in quite the way that those involved in its beginnings had hoped—adaptation. Instead of letting the irony and commentary die out in favor of the tease, as happened in the twentieth century, neo-burlesque troupes have been

able to successfully negotiate both characteristics of burlesque to revive the art form as a modern cultural phenomenon. On top of that, troupes such as Little Mama's have given a deeper, political purpose to the art form and are helping to re-expand the definition of burlesque for future generations. Adaptation is necessary to a cultural forms' continued impact on society and neo-burlesque is lending itself to the evolutionary mapping of burlesque.

Speaking to Questions of Bias and Advocacy

I feel that to be fair to my argument I must discuss any tones of advocacy that the writing took in this analysis. After hearing the responses of audience members and reading the narratives of Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue performances, it is apparent that what occurs at their shows, for many, is a moving and sometimes astounding display. For seventeen months I immersed myself in the neo-burlesque culture and was, like many of the audience members I surveyed, changed by the experience. As a woman and a feminist I was touched by every show, Little Mama's and otherwise. As a researcher, I was intrigued by the history of burlesque and its current use as a vehicle for dispersing both blatant and underlying social messages. Any bias that I may have towards the messages did not hinder my analysis of the use of burlesque as a form of social protest. My analysis was not as concerned with the specific content of the messages as it was concerned with how the messages were constructed, distributed, and received. If I have spoken as an advocate, it is because I am. I cannot completely separate what I experienced as an observer

from what I have learned as a researcher—my advocacy is based in both schools. I feel that to act as though this were not the case would be doing a disservice to my subject and its impact, as well as to other scholars engaging this piece.

Implications for Further Research

Further research is needed to assess how far reaching the implications of Rupp and Taylor's work on a queer/ feminist neo-burlesque troupe are when looking at the whole of neo-burlesque. Access to a larger sample of neo-burlesque troupes and their displays would produce more concrete results about the uses of the art form and how it has evolved. It would also help to assess whether or not neo-burlesque should claim, as Rupp and Taylor do with drag, that it is a non-traditional form of protest. It is my belief that further research would uncover some of the same traces of contestation, intentionality, and collective identity in the whole of neo-burlesque troupes that was found within the performances of LMBQR, while not necessarily being displayed in the same ways.

I also believe that more in-depth interviews with audience members might provide interesting insight about how well the contestations of various issues are received by the audience when not lain out for them in the explicit way that the Little Mama's troupe engages. I think that exploring the background and demographics of the audience members would also provide interesting data to help contextualize their interpretations.

Concluding

Burlesque has definitely changed from the original American format defined by Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes, despite still being closely tied to the art form. Neo-burlesque is categorized by a much more in your face tease. Troupes like Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue use it as a medium for both exhibiting their sexuality and political ideals, and are upheld as a form of social protest when analyzed with the Rupp and Taylor framework. As can be seen through the history of burlesque, this is less of a step away from the origins of burlesque and more of a step away from the misconceptions of burlesque as nothing more than stripping and those involved as nothing more than strippers.

These individuals are using a very old means of showcasing their voices in a time that is willing to water down their stage and display to nothing more than a "t & a" show. However, they, and others like them, are making waves in the minds of their audiences. Where neo-burlesque goes from here, no one really knows; however, it only seems to be gaining popularity and shows no signs of disappearing anytime soon.

Appendix A

A student at the University of Missouri, Portia King, is writing her thesis about burlesque and notions of burlesque. If you are willing, please fill out the following questionnaire and leave it at your table following the show. Please don't leave any markers that would point to your identity, as, for everyone's protection, she would like for responses to remain anonymous. If at any time you decide that you do not want to participate either leave the questionnaire blank or feel free to take it with you/ discard of it yourself.

1. Have you ever attended a burlesque show before, Little Mama's or otherwise? Please leave indications of where or who if the information is known.

2. What were your thoughts about burlesque prior to this show or your first burlesque show?

3. After seeing a Little Mama's Burly-Q Revue show, what are your thoughts on burlesque? Were you surprised by what you saw or how it made you feel--negatively or positively? Were your previous feelings about burlesque reinforced? Explain.

Appendix B

Respondent	Appendix A, Question 1	Appendix A, Question 2	Appendix A, Question 3
A	Yes, this is my 3rd LMBQR and there will be more…	Wonderful but underrated art form. Females at their finest. Not as trashy as stripping, not as stuffy as ballet	Love the political/ humanitarian aspects. Wonderful to see real people enjoying spreading powerful self-love messages (ok, that's a little hokey…). Love to be in an arena where being oneself is not aberrant, no matter what.
B	Yes, I attend as many LMBQ shows as I can. But I have been to no others.	Largely uniformed. I am generally in favor of sex(y) shows as long as their performers are all willing participants; not coerced in any way.	I was surprised at how forcefully political & empowering the show was.
C	No	Somewhat like Moulin Rouge-- flashy, fun music fun dances that I wish I could do (no rhythm here!) risqué, somewhat provocative	impressed that all body types were up there w/o shame b/c of their body- I'm not that brave & I'm glad that someone does it for the rest of us. WoW!
D	No. But I've enjoyed this one.	I once read an autobiography of Gypsy Rose Lee I think I was 12. I associate burlesque with the first half of the 20th century, and cities- and glamour, crudeness, sadness and smoking- a place where women are either "girls" or vamps, but are always on the stage to titillate heterosexual men & be laughed at by gay men.	Queering it changes some of the power dynamic and adds irony.
E	Yes- SoCo, Festivals. Does drag count as "burlesque"?	hard to remember a time before seeing drag at least. I never had a negative opinion, but what B-Qs are doing surpasses ordinary burlesque…mixing in the political & all	see above- I love the way they mix politics with art & performance. It makes me feel proud to be a Columbian, a dyke, a human being.

Respondent	Appendix A, Question 1	Appendix A, Question 2	Appendix A, Question 3
F	Yes Little Mama's	that it might have extra amounts of skin, but thought it couldn't be feminist oriented.	The way that Little Mama's takes off clothes w/the variety of bodies really astounded me the 1st time I saw it.
G	NO	Classy, yet seductive, flawless hair make up & wardrobe, confidence, retro	Much more enjoyable that I thought it would be. I appreciate the humor by including real life situations, like the housework skit.
H	no	I am curious, intrigued, I expect classy- yet seductive style, old school- yet fresh, timeless notions of sexuality.	Not what I expected- in a good way. A much more realistic yet timeless notion of sexuality (- recognizing sexists in the context of humor and reality)-- humorous, and conscientious, I enjoyed. Thank you.
I	Yes- I was a stripper in Orlando myself	Thought it couldn't be political or "cute".	It's cute, sexy fun!!
J	No	1950's strippers and beauty shows.	The show reminded me that we can take ownership of a message vehicle and shape it however we want. I was surprised by the show, but it made me feel happy, liberated, empowered.
K	Yes- The show @ fashion show & last show @ blue note & show @ soco	dance/ performance related to sensuality and mystery. Older performance act style for women.	Love it! Love the message and performance combined. Love celebration of real women and their bodies. Love exploration of current social justice oriented topics.

Respondent	Appendix A, Question 1	Appendix A, Question 2	Appendix A, Question 3
L	Just Burly-Q at the Blue Note last semester. I don't know when…	I didn't know anyone DID burlesque until Burly-Q! I figured it was something like the woman in Blazing Saddles…singing and backup dancers and sexy clothes. (This is better)	Thoughts: Sexy, Fun, Awesome way to "talk" about feminist issues. And how empowering!!! Surprised: Not really. I knew it was feminist, so I was expecting the awesome message. Feelings: reinforced how awesome feminism is.
M	Lil Mama's- several shows around here. Local troop at previous university/ college	I anticipated it being super hot and it was PLUS educational.	I suppose my feelings were reinforced b/c I had (+) feelings to start. I think burlesque is a fantastic means of communicating ideas--and y'all rock!
N	This is my 3rd Little Mama's Show. I saw one last year @ the Blue note & a few months ago @ SoCo	I had very few thoughts. I associated it w/ German culture for some reason.	I freakin' loved the performance. It (the performance) got me thinking about a lot of things- Gender norms, violence, boundaries, etc. The show accomplishes at least 2 things very well: it entertains & it educates. These 2 things together hold a lot of potential for aiding in struggles for social justice for all people.
O	Yes. Little Mama's at the Center Project show & the show at SoCo in Jan.	I thought burlesque was pretty much a strip show that was degrading, oh how I was wrong!	I found out that I had no idea what burlesque shows were about. After my first show I felt empowered! I was amazed to see woman who were not the "ideal" body type showing no fear. Being a "bigger person, myself, it made me feel good about myself. I also had no idea how political and socially conscious burlesque was. It was awesome to see gender norms being broken and people expressing their problems with our political system.

Respondent	Appendix A, Question 1	Appendix A, Question 2	Appendix A, Question 3
P	I have been to several other Little Mama's shows, at SoCo and the Blue Note.	I had no idea about what really went on at a burlesque show. I guess I just thought it was a strip show.	I was surprised, burlesque can be used to inform people about Important issues, sure stripping is involved but not in a bad way, and it can be used for good.
Q	Only been to see Little Mama's!	Before Lil Mama's I always associated (current) burlesque w/ Pussycat Dolls or Suicide Girls or something disgusting like that - nothing like what it was historically.	I love how LiL Mama's incorporated social justice ideals - and how a variety of body types and gender identified are portrayed- something mainstream "burlesque" like the Pussycat Dolls doesn't do in the slightest. Frequently, LiL Mama's numbers bring tears to my eyes. I especially love seeing women who are bigger than what is considered "beautiful" by society it makes me feel more pride and comfort w/ my own body.
R	Yes. Burly-Q @ SoCo	My first show experience was skewed by the fact that the focus was masturbation…something I heard was not representative of a typical burlesque show. However, my impressions were to experience radical feminist satirical burlesque.	I was invigorated by the show! It was an excellent satirical representation of our oppressive reality. I was pleasantly surprised with the burlesque show. My feelings about burlesque were changed in a positive way. I am happy to see that burlesque could be progressive rather than oppressive.
S	Yes. In New York.	I've always loved them. It is so great to get a secondary…less mainstream version of sexy.	
T	No	They were fun expression of my past lives.	A lot more comedic than I realized. It was fun & sexy.

Respondent	Appendix A, Question 1	Appendix A, Question 2	Appendix A, Question 3
U	Yes, I've seen Little Mama's 3x	I wasn't quite sure what it would all entail but was pleasantly surprised. I feel all performers do an incredible job destroying the belief that sexy is has to be one certain way.	Again, see above- I love the issues they tackle and how they are very comfortable challenging the conservative stereotypes of women.
V	Yes- LMBQR thrice before. That is all.	I knew little about burlesque- the little I knew/ had heard would probably include the terms "stripping", "risqué" and "for naked's sake only."	Thoughts: FUCK YEAH! Seriously: Burlesque is now a fun and entertaining way to give a message. It's genius- keep their attention w/ hot, talented, amazing, intelligent women & then BAM: reality. Bravo.
W	yes- in San Fran, Seattle, Dallas, Las Vegas	Didn't understand that it could be counter-cultural, protest commentary and oh-so-Queer- and this one fit the best expectations.	Not the "former" ones- but this met & and more so my ideas that it can have pol. Content- and oh yes- still be sooo sexy!
X	No	I love it. Its awesome Everyone is great.	It cool and intertaining. Great. It's my B-Day tonight thanks for such a great evening.
Y	No	I didn't really understand the concept until we discussed it in class, celebration of feminism.	Its fun and interesting!
Z	No		
AA	Nope	I expect a sexy display of awesome.	I got what I expected. It was neato bandito.

Respondent	Appendix A, Question 1	Appendix A, Question 2	Appendix A, Question 3
BB	NO!	I remember hearing about it when I was young. Sally Rand with the feather got a lot of attention.	It is what it is! No, there were no surprises for me because I knew before I came.
CC	No, I have not	dancing and performing	yes I was a little surprising it was something that haven't seen before so I guess I was a new experience. All the different kinds of acts.
DD	no	sexy erotic	sexy erotic, gender bending is fun! Yes- I totally got hot during the Soccer Practice skit. Everything was awesome.
EE	1/2 of one other.	I was quite pleased & that is the reason I am in attendance.	This one was so much better than SoCo, maybe the lighting?
FF	no	I had to ask my friends what it was about. I guess I'm out of the loop. I love taking clothes off to get attention to the issues- fun & pointed. Love it!	Very good, Keep up the work and I loved it. To the Revolutionaries! Here! Here!
GG	No, but seen plenty on tv or internet. NM- I saw you @ SoCo…I was drinking…that splains it all.	YAY! Fun, exciting, different, & eye opening! Jaw-dropping excitement!!	Not surprised. <3ed it. Thanks.
HH	No	Risqué	

Works Referenced

Allen, Robert C. (1991). *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Bart, Pauline B. (1985). “Pornography: Institutionalizing Woman-Hating and Eroticizing Dominance and Submission for Fun and Profit.” *Justice Quarterly*. 2:283-92.

Beneke, Timothy. (1990). “Intrusive Images and Subjectified Bodies: Notes on Visual Heterosexual Porn.” Pp. 168-87 in M. Kimmel (ed.), *Men Confront Pornography*. New York: Crown Books.

Berger, Ronald J., Searles, Patricia, and Charles E. Cottle. (1991). *Feminism and Pornography*. Praeger.

Burstyn, Varda. (1985). *Women Against Censorship.* Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre Ltd.

Buszek, Maria-Elena. (2006). *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*. Duke University Press.

Clark, Lorene M. G. (1983). “Liberalism and Pronography.” Pp. 45-49 in D. Copp and S. Wendell (eds.), *Pornography and Censorship*. Buffalo: Prometheus.

Ehrenreich, Barbara and Diedre English. (1978). *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts’ Advice to Women*. Anchor Books: New York.

Ferree, Myra Marx. (1992). “The Political Context of Rationality: Rational Choice Theory and Resource Mobilization.” Pp. 29-52 in A. D. Morris and C. M. Mueller (eds.), *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Foley, Brenda. (2005). *Undressed for Success: Beauty Contestants and Exotic Dancers as Merchants of Morality.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gibson, Pamela Church & Roma Gibson. (1993). *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power.* London: BFI Publishing.

Goffman, Erving. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.

------. (1974). *Frame Analysis.* Harper Colophon Books, New York.

Goldwyn, Liz. (2006). *Pretty Things: The Last Generation of American Burlesque Queens.* Regan.

Gould, Deborah. (2001). "Rock the Boat, Don't Rock the Boat, Baby: Ambivalence and the Emergence of Militant AIDS Activism." Pp. 133-57 in J Goodwin, J. M. Jasper, and F Polletta (eds.), *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, Chicago: University of Press Chicago Press.

hooks, bell. (1984). *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center.* Cambridge, Mass.: South End.

Liepe-Levinson, Katherine. (2002). *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire.* London: Routledge.

MacDonald, Scott. (1990). "Confessions of a Feminist Porn Watcher." Pp. 34-42 in M. Kimmel (ed.), *Men Confront Pornography*. New York: Crown Books.

MacKinnon, Catharine. (1984). "Not a Moral Issue." *Yale Law and Policy Review*. 2:321-45.

Morris Aldon. (1981). "Black Southern Student Sit-in Movement: An Analysis of Internal Organization." *American Sociological Review* 46: 744-67.

Myers, Kathy (1987) "Towards a Feminist Erotica." Pp. 189-202 in Rosemary Betterton (ed.), *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, London and New York: Pandora.

O'Neill, Maggie. (2001). *Prostitution & Feminsim: Towards a Politics of Feeling.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Personal Narratives Group. (1989). The. *Interpreting Women's Lives: Feminist Theory and Personal Narratives.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Rowland Esq., Debran. (2004). *The Boundaries of Her Body: The Troubling History of Women's Rights in America*. Sphinx Publishing: Naperville, Illinois.

Rupp, Leila J. and Verta Taylor. (2003). *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*. The University of Chicago Press.

Smith, D. (1989). *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Sobel, Bernard. (1956). *A Pictorial History of Burlesque*. G.P. Putnam and Sons.

Sohn, Amy. (2004) "Teasy Does It." New York Magazine. June 7.

Taylor, Verta. (1995). "Watching for Vibes: Brining Emotions into the Study of Feminist Organizations." Pp. 223-33 in M. M. Ferree and P. Y. Martin (eds.), *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Whittier, Nancy. (2002). "Meaning and Structure in Social Movements." Pp. 289-307 in D. S. Meyer, N. Whittier, and B. Robnett (eds.), *Social Movements: Identities, Culture, and the State*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Young-Eisendrath, Polly. (1999). *Women and Desire: Beyond Wanting to Be Wanted*. Harmony Books, New York.

Zeidman, Irving. (1967). *the American Burlesque show.* Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York.

Zimmermann, Anja. (2002). *“Sorry for Having to Make You Suffer": Body, Spectator, and the Gaze in the Performances of Yves Klein, Gina Pane, and Orlan. Discourse*. 24:3, 27-46.