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# Moral Degeneracy Goes Mainstream: New Evidence

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**Thursday, October 30, 2003**

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The article focuses on "The Cheetah," an Atlanta strip club that caters to an upscale crowd—and to women. "The Cheetah, like a growing number of upscale strip emporiums that welcome women, is not the take-it-all-off stereotype—a dark den of iniquity inhabited by groping men and grinding women with sad life stories. Indeed, stripping itself, once a forbidden topic in polite circles, is now strutting into the mainstream, propelled by pop culture and the loosening of societal taboos."

According to USA Today, these upscale strip clubs are fast becoming the entertainment destination of choice for both sexes. "Yea for the fact that women can walk into a strip club without an escort," declared one woman interviewed for the article. This is feminist progress?

Reporter Kitty Bean Yancey explains that exotic dancers appear regularly on television, and are even featured in their own cartoon, Stripperella. Wilma Flintstone has been replaced on the screen by a strip dancer? The soap operas have discovered the strippers, too. The Young and the Restless includes a character who strips in order to sustain her expensive lifestyle.

Lily Burana, a former stripper, relates that strip clubs used to be "an escape hatch for men," but now appeal to both men and women. "Sexuality became more egalitarian," she advised. Burana and her allies promote stripping as a path of empowerment and liberation for women. It's reaching the young as well.

Michael Barson, author of Teenage Confidential, says that what he calls stripper chic is "a watershed ... a big trend. It seems to be permeating deeper and deeper, like an ink stain sinking into an Oxford shirt." Not that he's greatly concerned about this, for Barson thinks that losing inhibitions is probably healthy. Nevertheless, Barson says, "I'm not sure how to defend it." And he's a parent!

Why would women go to strip clubs? "Women have a natural curiosity about each other's bodies," Burana offers. She must have a very unnatural definition of natural.

Psychologist Carol Ellison, author of Women's Sexualities, argues that a visit to a strip club "can be quite a safe sexual adventure." She revealed that a group of sexologists attended a strip club during a recent convention in Las Vegas. "It was a venture into the fantasy realm," she recalled, "if you don't think too long and too hard about what's happening in the [strippers'] minds. That's another issue."

Frankly, the very idea of a convention hall filled with "sexologists" is scary enough. The fact that these people take field trips to strip joints is sufficient to undermine their claim to scientific objectivity.

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas, told USA Today that the new popularity of stripping is evidence of big trouble. "The appetite for bare flesh ... is only further proof that Americans have forgotten from whence they came. They have, in many areas of life, forsaken biblical teachings." Indeed, tastes in entertainment reveal the character of a culture. America's continuing moral decline has been a boon for the strip club industry—but it will bring a high cost to the culture at large.

Some stripping proponents argue that the line between strip dancing and mainstream entertainment has virtually disappeared. USA Today pointed to music stars Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera as evidence. "Your average teen star could go right on a strip stage without changing clothes," asserts Burana.

An article in the November 3 edition of Newsweek seems to make her point. In "Bringing Up Britney," writer Lorraine Ali explains that "sex appeal is to Britney Spears what special effects are to 'The Matrix'." Her new wax figure at Madame Tussaud's in London straddles a pole and dances to her music.

Britney Spears' act is now pornographic. Gone is her girl-next-door look of years past. As Newsweek notes, she "has morphed from a schoolgirl heartthrob to a lap-dance fantasy."

Spears has a huge following among teenage girls, but her infamous open-mouthed kiss with Madonna on MTV's Music Video Awards show should be sufficient to alert parents to Britney's real agenda. If any doubts remain, the Newsweek article should clear them up thoroughly.

Responding to the reporter's question about the impact of her blatant sensuality on kids, Britney said: "It's a visual thing. That's why I'm here right now, because I dreamed of these moments. Kids need that. If they don't dream, they have what? That's what makes you feel spiritual, connected with God. But don't take it too literally. Just watch the performances, be drawn in. And if you don't like it, change the channel."

Don't take it too literally? Her comments can't even be taken seriously. Of course, she's not getting all this attention for her intelligence, but whatever point she is trying to make is perverse.

Britney is angry at former boyfriend Justin Timberlake, who told Barbara Walters that the couple had "done it." Her breakup with Timberlake was traumatic, she told Newsweek—so much so that she didn't date for six months. "What's happening?," she asked, "I know I'm not a lesbian." Well, Britney, what was going on with that kiss with Madonna? The magazine reports that Britney is now in a relationship with a married backup dancer—no gender given.

She's not exactly a brain trust. She told Newsweek that she's been into Indian religions of late, and these influenced her new album, "In the Zone." But when asked if Hinduism was one of these religions, the singer was dumbfounded. "What's that? Is it like kabbalah?" Is that question, like, pathetic?

These two articles reveal something of the sickness at the center of American society. The sexualization of the culture is not only drawing men and women into strip clubs, but it is also leading the entire society into a pornographic circus of moral confusion. Britney Spears' success and the new popularity of up-scale strip clubs are two pieces of the same puzzle.

The big picture is the abandonment of all moral scruples and boundaries. A society that would have its daughters imitate Britney Spears and points to women enjoying strip clubs as social progress is fast losing its moral sanity.

