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A Thesis Proposal

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As a woman, I often observe and experience societal pressure on women to be both sexy and modest. Slut shaming– stigmatizing a woman for engaging in behavior judged to be promiscuous is a phenomenon that seems inescapable in American culture. Every woman I know has at some point been slut shamed. However, society also places a large focus on women's sexuality and expects them to be sexually appealing. Women are often deemed "whores" based on the clothing they wear. This made me wonder how sex workers, the original whores, fit into this dynamic.

Statement of the Problem

The current study seeks to understand the influence of sex workers and other "whores" on fashion in the United States from the 19th century to now. The goal of the research is to explore and better understand how sex workers dress compared to other women in society, how their dress affects popular culture and mainstream fashion, how society views sex workers, and how societal attitudes towards these women affect their relationship to fashion. This research will attempt to answer two questions: (1) How have sex workers such as prostitutes and strippers impacted fashion throughout history, and (2) why does society scorn and judge women known for their sexuality while simultaneously expressing a fascination with them through emulation?

In this study, sex work is defined as the exchange of money or goods for sexual services, images, or performances. Sex workers are people who receive payment in exchange for consensual sexual services, images, or performances. Similarly, prostitutes are sex workers who engage in sexual activities for payment. Hooker, streetwalker, courtesan, and harlot are all synonyms for a prostitute. A pimp is a man who controls prostitutes and arranges clients for

them, taking part of their earnings in return. Strippers and exotic dancers are both defined as

people who dance in a seductive or provocative manner, usually while progressively removing

clothing. Pornography, or porn for short, is visual material such as photographs and videos that

depicts explicit imagery and is intended to be sexually arousing. The sex industry is the

commercial industry that provides prostitution and pornography. A whore is traditionally defined

as a prostitute; its current definition is more convoluted but can be generally interpreted as a

promiscuous woman, which is how this term will be defined in this study.

Justification for and Significance of the Study

There has been an increase in feminism and the reclamation of female sexuality in recent

years with social phenomena like the #MeToo Movement (Atwood, 2005; Clarke & Horley,

2016; Gill & Ogard, 2018). Sex work has become more widely accepted with the emergence and

popularity of platforms such as OnlyFans, which is a website where people can pay per month

for access to creators' sexually explicit content (Bernstein, 2019; Bosely, 2020; Lopez, 2020;

Van der Nagel, 2021). Celebrities like Megan Thee Stallion and Cardi B, who was once a

stripper, have brought female sexuality into the forefront of American discourse (Gill & Ogard,

2018; Holmes, 2020; McClinton, 2020). Within this discourse, there is an interesting and

contradictory dichotomy between the judgment and emulation of women considered to be

promiscuous. With this, I considered the impact of these women in previous generations. There

are references to prostitution and exotic dancing in media throughout time, and there is some

academic literature on prostitution, but there is little research on sex workers' dress or how and

why sex workers have influenced, and been influenced by, popular fashion.

The topic of how sex work relates to dress is important because fashion has many origins, including women in sex work (Best, 1998; Bennett, 2010; Coy, 2011; Tandberg, 1990). Because of the stigma surrounding sex work, their influence has been largely ignored, thereby marginalizing this entire segment of history. This topic explores the history of this phenomenon, as well as dissecting how and why these women impact fashion. In order to predict the future path of fashion, one must understand its past. The literature focuses mainly on historical prostitution (Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999), so the more modern fashions popular in sex work after the 19th century seem to be a largely ignored topic. Information on sex workers' dress has a variety of potential applications; for example, academics and historians focusing on women, sex work, and feminism in dress would be interested in the topic, and business leaders looking for upcoming trends could use this information to predict the future of fashion.

Although prostitution is often called the oldest profession in history (Coy, 2011; Gilfoyle, 1999; Tomura, 2009), the existing studies on sex work are both lacking and contradictory, creating many gaps in the literature (Coy, 2011; Pheterson, 1990; Rosenthal, 2015). Some researchers have conducted studies in which they interviewed sex workers, specifically strippers and prostitutes (Barrett-Ibarria, 2020; Salutin, 1971; Sanders, 2005; Tomura, 2009). These studies focused primarily on sex workers' morality (Salutin, 1971), identity (Sanders, 2005), and the stigma they experience (Tomura, 2009), but only the most recent involve their dress (Barrett-Ibarria, 2020). The specifics of sex worker's dress are largely ignored with the exception of studies examining specific case studies of prostitution (Best, 1998; Gilfoyle, 1987; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990). There is little literature about sex work aside from traditional prostitution (Pheterson, 1990, Rosenthal, 2015; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990). Furthermore, existing literature concerning prostitution history is primarily situated in Europe (Gilfoyle 1999), with

little in regards to the United States (Tandberg, 1990; Schulle, 2005). The fact that prostitution

has largely been illegal has limited the documentation of the phenomenon (Geary-Jones, 2017;

Schulle, 2005; Woolston, 1981). Much of the existing literature has distinct bias either in favor

of or against the practice of sex work. (Bromberg, 1997; Coy, 2011; Pheterson, 1990).

Theoretical Framework

Objectification theory states that women in society are acculturated to internalize an

observer's perspective as the primary view of their physical selves (Frederickson & Roberts,

1997). Current feminists have adopted this theory under the name of "the male gaze", asserting

that we, as a society, are so acculturated to viewing women from this objectified and sexualized

perspective that we overlook the reality of the female experience (Loofbourow, 2018; Oliver,

2017; Ponterotto, 2016). Researchers have discovered that this objectification negatively impacts

both girls and boys psychologically, as they internalize beauty ideals and increase self-

surveillance in order to meet these ideals (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012; Vandenbosch &

Eggermont, 2013; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Patterson & Elliott, 2010).

It is important to understand how objectification impacts sex workers' identity in order to

explore how it impacts their dress, as dress is both a creator and communicator of identity. Past

research primarily focused on how objectification affects identity and mental health

(Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013; Frederickson & Roberts

1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Patterson & Elliott, 2010). However, it has also shown that the

objectification of the male gaze promotes the idea that women are merely passive objects of

sexual desire to be possessed (Bromberg, 1997; Clarke & Horley, 2016; Munro et al, 2016;

Oliver, 2017; Ponterotto, 2016). This aspect of objectification theory serves as the framework for

my research. Prostitution as a profession involves the purchase of sexual activity, usually from a

woman, and therefore implies temporary possession of the woman's body. In other forms of sex work like stripping and pornography, the client purchases access to view the subject performing sexual acts. Through the framework of objectification theory, we can explore how prostitution reflects women being reduced to sexual objects for the male gaze. Sex workers are inherently objectified in the sale of their body, and this affects them both physically and mentally (Bromberg, 1997; Clarke & Horley, 2016; Salutin, 1971; Tomura, 2009).

Sexual objectification has been pervasive in Western society (Calogero, 2012; Lennon & Johnson Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Research has shown that external objectification often leads to self-objectification (Calogero, 2012; Frederickson, et al., 2011; Lennon & Johnson Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Women internalize objectification from both interpersonal media encounters, and likewise come to view and treat themselves as objects to be evaluated on their appearance (Calogero, 2012; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Recent research argues clothing and bodies act to facilitate or resist objectification, and has even found that women who self objectify tend to display more risky dress behavior (Lennon & Johnson, 2020). Since what society considers to be the ideal of feminine beauty is impacted by objectification in the media causing women self-objectify and self-survey (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012; Frederickson et al., 2011; Moradi & Huang, 2008), this would then affect what prostitutes wear in order to be objectified, be desirable and make money (Munro et al, 2016). In this way, sexual objectificaiton ultimately impacts the dress of women and sex workers alike.

Money and Sex

Many of the studies involving sex work explore the relationship between money and sex, and how it relates to women (Attwood, 2005; Bennett, 2010; Coy, 201; Evans, 2003, Gilfoyle 1999; Valverde, 1989). Women in society are both seen as people who spend money and as

objectified commodities to be bought and sold themselves (Bennett, 2010; Coy, 2011; Evans, 2003; Oakleaf, 2008; Pullen, 2005; Rosenthal, 2015; Salutin,1971). Sex workers embody the objectification and commodification of the female body (Clark & Horley, 2016; Pheterson, 1993; Munroe, 2016; Scambler et al., 1990). This commodification and objectification of women both reflects on society's perception of female sexuality and situates the female sex worker within a unique position in society compared to other women because they are in control of their own commodification. The practice of marriage traditionally meant that women were seen as property owned by men, but prostitutes were radical because they had self-ownership, their own money, and purchasing power independent of a man (Rosenthal, 2015; Salutin, 1971).

Double Standard of Sexuality

In accordance with the framework of objectification, several resources have documented the double standard seen in attitudes toward male and female sexuality (Armstrong, 2014; Attwood, 2005; Best, 1998; Coy, 2011; Oakleaf, 2008; Pheterson, 1990; Pullen, 2005; Salutin, 1971). Sexual activity is regulated by moral codes, but these codes are not the same between genders. For example, women are judged for being sex workers, but men are not judged for purchasing sex (Armstrong, 2014; Pliley, 2018; Oakleaf, 2008). It is seen as more socially acceptable for men to engage in sexual activity than women, but women are also the objects of sexual desire. Modesty plays a role in this, as women are expected to both show off and hide their bodies just as they are expected to be both sexy and virtuous (Flugel, 1930; Oakleaf, 2008; Wilson, 1985). This mirrors the double standards of how sex workers are both desired as sexual objects yet judged for making themselves available as sexual objects.

The Sex Worker in Society

Alongside their objectification, sex workers also experience stigma (Geary-Jones, 2017; Pheterson, 1990; Salutin, 1971; Tomura, 2009). Another major theme of past studies is that prostitutes were emulated by young women who desired to be fashionable, but were scorned by society as a whole (Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999; Oakleaf, 2008). Part of the reason the word 'whore' has become so vague is that the words traditionally associated with the profession of sex work like "whore", "slut", and "harlot" evolved into value judgements that describe any woman deemed to be "bad" or "promiscuous" (Bennett, 2010; Pheterson, 1990; Pullen, 2005; Tomura, 2009)

The Infectious Sex Worker

Throughout the nineteenth century, prostitutes were continually viewed as sources of moral and physical contamination to society. There was a large amount of fear concerning venereal disease, and prostitutes were well known as deadly purveyors of these diseases (Best, 1998; Evans, 2003; Pheterson, 1990; Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999; Woolston, 1921). To a large extent, these fears of venereal disease were valid (Hill, 1993; Paz-Bailey et al., 2016; Pliley, 2018; Woolston, 1921). One document from Woolston (1921) noted that when studying sexually transmitted disease among sex workers, "it is safe to assume that at least from 60 per cent to 75 per cent have a venereal taint" (p. 180). Sex workers are still considered to be at high risk for sexually transmitted diseases (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2022; Paz-Bailey et al., 2016; Nasirian et al., 2017), and have been blamed for the AIDS epidemic while also being neglected in regards to prevention and treatment of the disease (Scambler et al., 1990; The Lancet, 2012; Pheterson, 1990).

Sex workers were known as a "social evil", and there were even laws and regulations put in place such as the Social Evil Ordinance and the Contagious Disease Acts due to the stigma surrounding them (Scambler et al., 1990; Schulle, 2005; Valverde, 1989; Woolston, 1921). As well as being seen as a source of physical corruption, sex workers were also seen as source of moral pollution (Bennett, 2010; Geary-Jones, 2017; Long, 2005; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). One reason for this fear of moral contamination may have been because sex workers blended in, and were therefore indistinguishable from the rest of moral society (Bennnett, 2010; Geary-Jones, 2017; Tandberg, 1990; Woolston, 1921). Despite their continued existence and business success throughout history, Western society has had a largely negative perspective of sex workers.

Identifying the Sex Worker

While sex workers sometimes used fashion to stand out, it also allowed them to blend in to 'proper' society, especially as access to textiles and modern fashions increased for the lower class (Bennett, 2010; Geary-Jones, 2017). Because of the stigma associated with sex work, most women in the sex industry hide their profession outside of work (Geary-Jones, 2017; Salutin, 1971; Tomura, 2009). It can be hard to identify sex workers through their dress – so much so that there have been court cases centered around it. On numerous occasions throughout American history, police officers have erroneously identified woman on the street as sex workers because of their dress (Briquelet, 2013; Struening, 2016). For example, in 2013, a Manhattan judge dismissed a woman's prostitution case, saying the NYPD failed to recognize what constitutes sex worker's attire; the woman was wearing a black pea coat, skinny jeans, and platform high heels, which the judge did not consider to be indicative of prostitution (Briquelet, 2013). This

ambiguity in identifying sex workers by their dress in both social and legal settings shows just how overlooked the subject is.

Sex Work and Status

Many of the studies support the claim that sex workers were feared because they blurred class lines and were seen as a contaminant of the exclusive upper class (Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). Prostitutes enjoyed enhanced wealth and status due to their profession and interacted with the upper echelons of society in a way that most lower-class citizens did not. Dress is a way to convey social status, and they did not conform to the regular dress codes of the social classes. Class-based norms regulated what women wore and how they acted, but prostitutes contradicted these social morals (Armstrong, 2014; Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Long, 2005; Pullen, 2010; Tandberg, 1990). Women in sex work, unbridled by polite convention, were judged by society and generally considered to be rude, lewd, bawdy, and overall indecent (Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1987; Long, 2005; Woolston, 1921).

There are different types of sex workers, and each section of the sex industry has its own respective categories within it (Geary-Jones, 2017 Pullen, 2005; Valverde, 1989; Woolston, 1921). Because of this, social hierarchies exist within sex work, and usually reflect the social status of the workers' clients (Geary-Jones, 2017; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989; Woolston, 1921). The social hierarchy of sex work traditionally ranged from women who worked the streets, to women who worked out of brothels, to high class escorts (Geary-Jones, 2017, Scambler et al., 1990; Woolston, 1921). While past research has some information on 19th century social hierarchies and dynamics of sex work, there is little to none on their current condition.

Sex Work and Modernity

Several of the studies argued that prostitution is associated with modernity (Gilfoyle, 1999; Evans, 2003; Rosenthal, 2015). Their social, political, and economic push for liberation placed them in a distinctly feminist and modern position in society (Attwood, 2005; Pheterson, 1990). However, sex work is highly debated within feminism due to the contradictory fact that it can both liberate and victimize women (Bromberg, 1997; Coy, 2011; Scambler et al., 1990). Historically, women were expected to be owned by and dependent on their husbands, but sex workers were uniquely independent (Best, 1998; Pliley, 2018; Rosenthal, 2015). Prostitutes were feared because they represented feminism and women's social, economic, and sexual emancipation (Attwood, 2005; Coy, 2011; Best, 1998; Evans, 2003; Gilfoyle, 1999; Pullen, 2005; Valverde, 1989). These women did not adhere to traditional morality and social norms, and they relied on other women for support rather than men (Oakleaf, 2008; Tandberg, 1990). Their disruption of expected morality, rejection of social norms, liberal and feminist tendencies, and economic power all place sex workers in a position of modernity. This is visually represented by sex workers' modern, bold, and risque fashions (Bennett, 2010; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990).

Sex Work and Fashion

Several studies (Bennett, 2010; Evans, 2003; Geary-Jones 2017, Schulle 2005, Tandberg 1990, Rosenthal 2015) support the idea of the prostitute as a consumer. Historically, there is a pervasive idea that women love to shop, and that this vanity is what leads them to become prostitutes (Geary-Jones, 2017; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989), which some literature supports and some disputes. Prostitutes were considered a "social evil" because people

feared that women would want to be fashionable and resort to prostitution to pay for it (Bennett, 2010; Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990). The literature as a whole asserts that one of the main reasons prostitutes have historically been scorned is because they are seen as fashion symbols that vain young women may emulate and are therefore a source of moral corruption (Bennett, 2010; Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999; Rosenthal, 2015; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990). However, some of the literature also considers other reasons, like poverty, that may contribute to women choosing a life of prostitution (Best, 1998; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Valverde, 1989). There is also a distinct association between prostitutes and reckless spending, as well as the inability to save money (Bennett, 2010; Salutin, 1971; Valverde 1989).

     Finery. Another common theme in the literature is the association between prostitutes and expensive, ostentatious clothing known as *finery*. Several studies (Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Schulle, 2005; Valverde, 1989) established a strong link between the idea of prostitutes and women who dressed in excessive finery. Sex workers were associated with heavy makeup, bright colors, and bold styles that announced their presence (Geary-Jones, 2017; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). Sex workers were known for their luxurious and unique styles that set them apart from regular women, although it is unclear whether these women chose finery in order to be desirable to potential clients or simply because they had the funds to buy whatever they pleased (Bennett, 2010; Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1999; Hill, 1993; Rosenthal, 2015; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Wilson, 1985).

     Styles that denoted a prostitute's status could be either imposed by sumptuary laws, which regulated dress and were meant to identify them, or as a voluntary means to distinguish themselves and attract customers. A person's dress functions as a means of communication

during social interaction, and because of this, it influences how they perceive the identities of both themselves and others (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Sex workers' dress functions to create and display their professional identity and attract customers, but it also serves to hide and protect their personal identity (Attwood, 2005; Rosenthal, 2015; Sanders, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Tomura, 2009).

Prostitute Chic. Postmodern "prostitute chic", also known as "hooker chic" may be attributed to sex workers' association with consumption and risqué style (Bennett, 2010). The word "chic" itself is synonymous with current and stylish fashion; the term "prostitute chic" therefore equates sex work with fashionability and brings sex work into mainstream discourse. One could argue that the term fetishizes the idea of sex work as much as sex workers themselves are fetishized. Past literature also notes the relationship between prostitution and modern consumerism, arguing that shopping is sexualized, and that the idea of prostitution is now being used as a marketing tool to sell women clothes (Attwood, 2005; Bennett, 2010; Coy, 2011; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989).

Due to this fetishization, depictions of sex work have frequently made their way into couture and popular fashion media (Attwood, 2005; Bennett, 2010; Coy, 2011; Evans, 2003). For example, in 2013, Louis Vuitton sparked controversy with an ad in which models including Cara Delevingne and Georgia Jagger depicted prostitutes in French alleyways (Adams, 2017; Sage, 2013). The collection itself, Vuitton's 2013 Fall/Winter collection, features outfits one would expect to see on a prostitute after a long night; it includes women wearing oversized men's coats over lingerie and slip dresses, sheer low cut dresses, and large fur coats paired with red lipstick (Appendix A, Figure 1; Phelps, 2013).

Some sex workers themselves have been able to break out into the fashion world – In 2012, former sex worker Zahia Dehar emerged in fashion after she gained notoriety through a high-profile sex scandal at the age of 16. She went on to show multiple couture lingerie lines at Paris Haute Couture Fashion Week and was reported to be Karl Lagerfeld's muse and protégée (CBSNews, 2012; Crisafis, 2012; Snead, 2018). There is a prominent link between mainstream fashion, objectification, and sex work that can be seen in a variety of contexts both in past and modern media, which culminates in the creation and popularity of "prostitute chic".

Many conservative mothers have criticized the "hooker chic" trend, as well as the styles like exposed skin and platform heels that come with it (Darrah, 2020; Mercury News, 2016; Meyorwitz, 2011; NBCUniversal News Group, 2007). Not long before this, MGA Entertainment's very popular Bratz Doll (Appendix A, Figure 2) was criticized for their risque fashions that parents believed would sexualize their children (Duncum, 2007; NBCUniversal News Group, 2007; Oppiliger, 2008). One author details, "Bratz doll's large mouths are pouty, sultry, even collagen-injected; their huge eyes are indolent, thick-lined, heavy-lidded and glazed. Their tight fitting, revealing midriffs and skimpy skirts ensure they are scantily clad and thus trashy, even slutty. Their ensemble of features could be called "hooker chic" (Duncum, 2007). Recently, equally popular LOL Surprise Dolls (Appendix A, Figure 3) created by the same man, Carter Bryant, have similarly come under fire for their scandalous 'hooker' clothes such as a "skimpy leopard bodysuit" and fishnet stockings seen on one doll (Darrah, 2020). The proliferation of sex workers' dress in things as innocuous as children's toys shows its impact on popular fashion as well as the normalization of objectification.

Sex Work in the United States

Although sex work occurs worldwide, the focus of this study is on the United States in particular. In order to understand the perception and fashion influence of sex workers in the United States today, it is essential to understand their foundations and greater cultural context. Commercialized sex has been a staple of the urban setting in America since the 19th century (Coy, 2011; Gilfoyle, 1987; Pliley, 2018; Schulle, 2005). Although much of the past research on sex work has focused on its history in Europe (Geary-Jones, 2017; Rosenthal, 2015), some have explored the phenomenon within the United States (e. g., Best, 1998; Long, 2005; Gilfoyle, 1987; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Woolston, 1921). These pieces are often case studies examining historical images and documents in order to detail laws and norms regarding sex work at the time (e.g., Best, 1998; Long, 2005; Gilfoyle, 1987; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990). These studies all show connections between sex work, fashion, and morality in American history, which mirrors the themes of sex work seen Europe (Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Rosenthal, 2015; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). The prosperity of the sex industry in America is what lays the foundation for analyzing how sex workers and their fashion have been perceived, judged, and emulated there.

Public Perception. While sex work was legal for periods of time in the United States in cities such as 1790-1920 New York, 1898-1917 New Orleans, 1865-1883 St. Paul, and 1870-1874 St. Louis, there has been a large amount of fear surrounding physical and moral contamination from sex workers (Best, 1998; Gilfoyle, 1987; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Woolston, 1921). Many cities passed 'Social Evil Ordinances' regulating the practice (Best, 1998; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020; Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1987; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005). These ordinances were similar to the Contagious Diseases Acts passed in Britain between 1864-1869 that aimed to prevent venereal disease and allowed police officers to

arrest any woman they suspected of prostitution (Geary-Jones, 2017; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020; Scambler et al., 1990; Valverde, 1989, Woolston, 1921).

Past research generally accepts that society in America has traditionally feared sex workers and women deemed to be promiscuous as a form of contagion, but there is disagreement as to why (Armstrong, 2014; Evans, 2003; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). The most obvious reason is that they were a source of physical disease (Best, 1998; Evans, 2003; Hill, 1993; Valverde, 1989; Woolston, 1921). However, sex workers were considered to be morally contaminating as well (Bromberg, 1997; Geary-Jones, 2017; Gilfoyle, 1987; Tandberg, 1990). It is important to understand how sex workers have been perceived historically in order to predict and understand how they are perceived in modern society.

Shop Girls. American women took up sex work for a variety of reasons (Best, 1998; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Woolston, 1921). There is a strong connection between the clothing industry in America and prostitution for three main reasons. The first reason is that many seamstresses and shop girls made little money and became prostitutes to supplement their small income (Pliley, 2018; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989, Woolston, 1921). The second reason is that these shop girls were exposed to beautiful clothing and wanted access to the fine things they were surrounded by (Best, 1998; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). The third is that many prostitutes listed their profession as "seamstress" on the census to hide their sex workers status which was widely known at the time (Best, 1998; Hill, 1993; Woolston, 1921).

Dress. Past literature asserts that throughout the 19th century, it was common for sex workers in the United States to be identifiable as such by their dress (Best, 1998; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). In some cases, sumptuary laws required sex

workers to be distinguishable from the general public thereby forcing them to wear certain things (Best, 1998; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989). What prostitutes of the time were mainly known for was finery (Appendix A, Figure 4) and bold extravagant fashions (Best, 1998; Schulle, 2005; Tandberg, 1990; Valverde, 1989; Woolston, 1921). The 'Madames' who ran and controlled the brothels where prostitutes worked had money and therefore access to fine clothing, which they used to entice, control, reward, and punish working girls (Best, 1998; Hill, 1993; Tandberg, 1990).

Unfortunately, there is little documentation about what American sex workers have been wearing over the past two centuries, as the majority of literature containing primary sources only includes demographic and statistical information rather than photographs or drawings of these women (Best, 1998; Gilfoyle, 1987; Hill, 1993; Schulle, 2005; Woolston, 1921). The literature that does include drawing and photographs of sex workers show women of all races in a variety of dress ranging from simple dresses (Appendix A, Figure 5) to elaborate gowns (Appendix A, Figure 6). The women often have their hair down, and they have bold statement pieces such as jewels, furs, dresses that expose their ankles, and bold striped stockings (Appendix A, Figure 7) if they wear anything at all (Geary-Jones, 2017; Hill, 1993; Tandberg, 1990).

Influence. These extravagant outfits and new styles that were introduced by sex workers impacted what other woman in society wore and influenced popular fashion (Best, 1998; Geary-Jones, 2017; Tandberg, 1990). The influence of sex work on fashion can still be seen today (Coy, 2011; Duncum, 2007; Evans, 2003; Oppiliger, 2008; Sage, 2013). Presently, there is no official dress code for sex work, but there are some styles commonly associated with sex work such as the 'stripper heel' (Appendix A, Figure 8) (Barrett-Ibarria, 2020; Coy, 2011; Tandberg, 1990).

Although sex workers' influence on fashion can be observed in American society, it has been a

neglected area of academic study.

Method

Research Design

This study will be done with explanatory sequential mixed methods. Mixed methods is a

procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" or integrating both quantitative and qualitative

data to gain a better understanding of the subject matter (Creswell & Creswell, 2020; Ivankova et

al., 2006). In explanatory sequential mixed methods, the researcher first conducts quantitative

research, then conducts quantitative research to build on the results to explain them more

thoroughly (Creswell & Creswell, 2020; Ivankova et al., 2006). It is explanatory because the

initial quantitative data results are explained further with the addition of qualitative data, and it is

sequential because the first quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase. (Creswell &

Creswell, 2020). This type of mixed methods design is taken when neither quantitative nor

qualitative methods are sufficient alone. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative

methods complement each other and allow for a more in depth analysis (Ivankova et al., 2006).

Because the topic of sex work is so complex, explanatory sequential mixed methods is the best

approach for understanding its many dimensions.

The main questions of the research are how sex workers have impacted fashion and why

society has contradictory views on female sexuality. In order to answer these broad questions, I

will first need to answer more simple questions: (1) what do sex workers wear, (2) what clothing

does the general public associate with sex work, (3) how does the general public feel about sex

work, and (4) how does sex workers' fashion affect mainstream fashion in Rhode Island?

The first portion of the research will be a quantitative study through survey. For this study Hypothesis 1 is designed to investigate how public attitudes towards sex work influence people's perceptions of sex worker fashion such that one's positive attitudes towards sex workers will lead to positive perception of their fashion. This information will then be used to guide the second portion of the study, which will be a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews with sex workers to understand how they dress and objectification affects them as well as how their profession impacts fashion.

Location

The quantitative survey portion will be done online through Qualtrics; it will be based in Rhode Island but the online nature of the survey means that anyone in the United States could respond to it. The qualitative interview portion will take place at strip clubs in Providence Rhode Island, specifically Foxy Lady and Wonderland RI (previously Wild Zebra Gentlemen's Club and Cheaters Gentlemen's Club), because both have reputations for and have been shut down in the past for prostitution (Amaral, 2018; Milkovits, 2021). While the overall population this study is designed to explore how sex work has impacted American fashion as a whole, logistical limitations will limit this study to the Rhode Island area.

Population

The population I will study for the survey study is adults in Rhode Island. The population I am studying for the interviews is specifically female identifying sex workers who have worked as prostitutes and/or strippers within the past 10 years. For both groups, the population will be between the ages of 18 and 80 because I would like to get responses from a diverse group of

people spanning multiple generations to get a broad perspective of the subject. It is important to

note that sex workers are a population that must be treated with care, as sex work is stigmatized

and often illegal. It is essential to make these women feel safe and ensure their identities and

sensitive information are protected.

Sample

For the quantitative portion, I have based my sample size survey responses on the total

population of Providence, Rhode Island, so I can get a reasonably broad variety of respondents

while still having a manageable amount of data. This population, which is roughly 181,000

people, combined with a 95% confidence interval, and a 5% margin of error equates to an ideal

sample size of 384. Based on this information, I am aiming for a sample size of 360-400

participants. This will be a convenience and snowball sample. I will email the survey to everyone

I know within my criteria and post it on my social media. I will then ask at the end of the survey

for the respondents to send it to other people they know and post it on social media.

For the interview portion of the study, I will be taking a more ethnographic approach. I

will talk to six women at each of the clubs, totaling 12 participants. To gain access to the clubs, I

will reach out to management through email and then by showing up to the clubs in person to

explain who I am and what my research is, as well as informing them of confidentiality measures

to ensure that there is no impact on the club. To recruit participants, I will first spend a week

with the women at the clubs getting to know them and building trust. At the end of this week, I

will ask 6 women at each of the clubs if they would like to be interviewed based on who has

expressed previous interest. If some decline, I will then ask other women working until I get

enough participants or they have all declined, at which point I would look at other clubs. I plan

on individual interviews, although the nature of doing interviews at a club with many women may lead to them becoming group interviews. The women must all be over the age of 18, which should be expected at a strip club but is not necessarily guaranteed. At each club I want to interview at least one woman who has been working in the sex industry for under a year, one for between one and five years, and one for over five years.

Data Collection Process and Schedule

For the survey data collection, I will send the survey online through email, text, and social media. With this, I will request that respondents send the survey to people they know as well. I will then check the number of responses every week until at least 60 participants have responded at which time I will end the survey and start to organize and analyze the data. The survey will begin with a consent form and information on the anonymity of the study (See Appendix D). I will also ask for demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, education level, and religion, as these factors may impact responses. As sex work is a sentisitve topic, it is essential to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants.

For the interview portion of the study, I will go to Foxy Lady and then Wonderland RI for three consecutive weeks each. To obtain access to these clubs, I will contact them first online to explain who I am, the research I am conducting, and request to interview the women there. I will then go to the clubs in person to meet with a club manager or owner face to face, which would also allow me to introduce myself to the women working there. In the case that one of these clubs declines to participate in the study, I will contact other Rhode Island strip clubs such as Wild Zebra and The Cadillac Lounge. At each club, I will go on Monday and Wednesday from 3-6pm when the clubs are open but not very busy yet so the women working have time to

be interviewed, and then again on Saturday nights from 11pm-2am when the clubs are busiest in

order to interview more popular experienced strippers and talk to the subjects in a different

context. The first week at each club I will get to know the girls working and establish trust as

well as identify how long they have been working there to determine who I want to interview

and who is willing to be interviewed. The second week I will interview two different women on

each of the three days I am there, spending around an hour and a half with each. The third week I

will interview these same six women again in the same order to gather any information they may

have thought of afterwards and confirm that my data is consistent.

Measures

Attitudes Towards Prostitution. For my quantitative survey I will need to measure the

independent variable, public attitudes towards of sex work, as well as the dependent variable,

perceptions of sex worker fashion. To measure public attitudes towards sex work, I will be

adapting Sawyer & Mertz's (2009) Attitudes Towards Prostitution Scale (ATPS). This scale has

three factors and 12 items, which are formatted as a four-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly*

disagree, 4 = *strongly agree*). This scale is based on Basow & Campanile's (1990) original five

factor, 12 item Attitudes Towards Prostitution Scale (ATP). There has been past research done to

validate and improve these scales (Levin & Peled, 2011; Pucci, 2007; Sawyer & Mertz, 2009)

which have been adapted for the purposes of this study. Sawyer & Mertz's scale includes three

subscales which were tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient analyses.

These subscales include: Social/Legal Support of Prostitution, α = .80; Beliefs About

Prostitution, α = .74; and Family Values Related to Prostitution, α = .61. (Appendix B, Table 1).

Perceptions of Fashion

To measure perceptions of sex worker fashion, the variable of fashion will be broken

down into five factors - stylishness, sophistication, expense, modernity, and modesty. These

factors come from the common themes seen in the literature review. The factors will be

measured using a bipolar matrix style Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress scale designed for this

study (Appendix B, Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress Scale). I created this scale specifically for

this study, and when used in a pilot study, it had an acceptable reliability of $\alpha = 0.709$.

Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interview portion of the study will be based on the same factors as the

Attitudes Towards Prostitution Scale and Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress scales used in the

survey, but will explore sex workers' perspectives on the topics (see Appendix B, Table 3). This

portion will consist of semi-structured interviews with sex workers. It is essential that some

topics like dress be discussed and I want to compare experiences between sex workers, which is

where having structured pre-determined questions come in. However, the qualitative interviews

need to let the respondents describe their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2020), which is

especially important since sex workers are so often marginalized. To conduct these interviews, I

will first need to ensure that I have participant consent and anonymity (See Appendix D)

Data Coding/Recording

I will record my data for the survey using Qualtrics, which will then be analyzed in SPSS.

For the interview portion, I will record the interviews using the Otter Pro app, transfer the

transcriptions into Microsoft Word, check the transcriptions for accuracy, and then code the data

based on themes. The themes I will be coding for are dress, objectification, morality, identity,

judgment, emulation, and consumption.

Proposed Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected, I will use both the external public perceptions of sex work

as well as internal perceptions from sex workers. I will first analyze the quantitative surveys to

understand attitudes towards sex work and how they impact perceptions of sex worker fashion.

The results of this frame the qualitative portion of the research in which I will interview sex

workers themselves to understand their perceptions. After analyzing public attitudes towards sex

workers and their perceptions of dress, I will then have a better understanding of the context sex

workers are situatied in. As workers in the sex industry, their profession requires that they

interact with the public. How the public treats these women will likely affect them, particularly

in regards to self-objectification and attitudes towards the public. The interviews with sex

workers will then allow me to explore in what ways these women are respondng and reacting to

the public. Since interaction between public and sex workers is an essential part of sex work, it is

important as the researcher to gain an understanding of them both.

Phase One

The first phase of data analysis will be an investigation into the effect Attitudes Towards

Sex Work has on Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress. I will use Cronbach's alpha to determine the

reliability of my data. I will also conduct hypothesis testing by comparing my data set's

probability value to a critical value of $\alpha = 0.05$ to support or reject the null hypothesis. I will then

test using Pearson's correlation to determine if there is a positive association between the

variables, which would support my hypothesis that public attitudes towards sex work influence

people's perceptions of sex worker fashion such that one's positive attitudes towards sex workers

will lead to positive perception of their fashion. This correlation value will then be compared to

each variable's average of squared factor-loadings (AVE) to determine if there is divergent

validity. The factor loadings will also be analyzed to look for cross loading between variables

and to interpret the data results. The last piece of data analysis for this portion will be

demographic analysis.

Phase Two

For the qualitative data analysis portion, I will use a combination of inductive and

deductive coding. I will first use deductive coding to create a basic set of codes to guide my data

analysis. Depending on the results of the interviews, I will then use inductive coding to adjust

and expand my code system. It is important to include inductive coding to allow the subjects to

guide this portion of the research rather than sticking to my initial biased interpretations. Codes

generally fall into three categories: expected codes, surprising codes, and codes of unusual or of

conceptual interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). Using more than just one type of coding will

allow me to have codes from all three categories.

I will be using thematic analysis to explore patterns and relationships within the data.

Qualitative research was selected for this study because it allows the information gathered to be

led by human experience. Thematic analysis is a tool for analyzing qualitative data; it is a

method that allows the researcher to identify, analyze, organize, and describe themes found

within data (Nowell et al., 2017). This method is the best choice for analyzing the complex,

diverse, and nuanced experiences of sex workers. Thematic analysis will allow me, as the

researcher, to serve as a translator between the research subjects and those learning about them.

This method allows for flexibility and is easily comprehensible, but most importantly, it is useful

for examining the lived experiences of research participants, exploring the similarities and

differences between them, and observing unexpected insights (Nowell et al., 2017). The

quantitative portion of this study is designed to provide baseline data regarding attitudes towards

sex workers and perceptions of their dress, which will then be considered alongside the themes

generated through thematic analysis of the qualitative data in order to create a comprehensive

understanding of how sex work relates to dress.

Pilot Study Findings

A principal analysis of the data indicated that there was internal consistency of the scales;

Using Cronbach's Alpha, the Attitudes Towards Prostitution Scale (ATPS) had a good reliability

of $\alpha = 0.816$, and the Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress Scale had an acceptable reliability of $\alpha =$

0.709. The variables were correlated at (Pearson correlation) $r = 0.373$, $p = 0.042$, which

supports a positive and significant relationship between the variables. The square root of the

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the ATPS (AVE $= 0.625$) and the PSWDS (AVE $= 0.825$)

are both larger than the correlation, which indicates that the variables successfully indicate

divergent validity.

Sawyer & Mertz's (2009) scale includes three subscales which were tested for internal

consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient analyses. These subscales include: Social/Legal

Support of Prostitution, $\alpha = .80$; Beliefs About Prostitution, $\alpha = .74$; and Family Values Related

to Prostitution, $\alpha = .61$. Although this is the most recent scale on the topic, it is now 13 years old

and public attitudes have changed over time. This is shown by the major and surprising cross

loading between factors, which indicates that the component categories need to be reevaluated.

After removing the items from the Attitudes Towards Prostitution Scale that had factor

cross loading, I did another analysis of the data, and discovered interesting results. The new

reliability of the ATPS was reduced to $\alpha = 0.654$, which is questionable; this is most likely due to

the fact that there were few questions left in the scale. Although the reliability was lessened, the

probability score was reduced to $p = 0.021$ which indicated more statistically significant results,

the Pearson correlation was increased to $r = 0.419$, and the scale's AVE increased to AVE =

0.779, indicating better discriminant validity.

Despite the improvements in validity, this scale still has cross loading after removing

items. This further supports that the individual items are not the problem, but rather the

components they fit into. An updated version of the subscales should still be categorized into

three groups, but these groups should be retitled. The original items from Social/Legal Support

of Prostitution should be recategorized as Support of Sex Work. The subcategory of Family

Values Related to Prostitution should be replaced with Justification for Sex Work. The third

category, Beliefs about Prostitution, would be more accurately represented as Beliefs about Sex

Workers Motivations.

Surprisingly, the Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress Scale split into two components when

looking at the factor loadings. This indicates that there are, in fact, two different components

within the concept of dress that need to be identified. The items that compare Provocative versus

Modest and Cheap versus Expensive both fit into the category of Objective Observation

Perceptions – these are more concrete aspects of dress. The items that compare Outdated versus

Modern, Trashy versus Classy, and Unfashionable versus Stylish fit into the category of Subjective Taste Perceptions – these aspects of dress are based on personal preference.

Regression analysis showed that although there was an overall positive relationship between between attitudes towards sex work and perceptions of sex workers' dress ($F(1, 28) = 5.97, p = 0.021, R^2 = .176, R^2_{adjusted} = .146$), the only aspects of dress perceptions that attitude significantly influenced were modernity ($p = 0.049$) and sophistication ($p = 0.005$). This is likely due to the fact that because of objectification, qualities like expense and style of clothing are less associated with judgment than overall class. Societal objectification places immodesty outside the same realm of judgment as being "trashy" or a "hooker". It is interesting to note that prostitutes used to be associated with finery, and the case is just the opposite today.

Due to the fact that I used a convenience sample for this survey, the demographics of the participants reflect my personal biases and who I have easy access to for subjects. 60% of the respondents were Female, 63.3% were 18-29 years old, 83.3% were Caucasian, and 60% self-identified as a Democrat. An Independent Samples T-test revealed that the answers of men and women were fairly similar, except for the interesting detail that men were slightly less likely to think that sex workers like men, but were also slightly more likely to say that there is nothing wrong with sex work and that it should be legalized. Despite the support male participants showed for sex work, they also thought that sex workers' fashion was less stylish, less modern, and more expensive than the female participants did. An Independent Samples T-test to investigate age revealed that the older respondents who were between the ages of 30-39 were more in support of sex work than the respondents between 18-29. Despite this, the older group also rated sex worker fashion as more outdated and less stylish.

Resources Required

The first resource required is past documentation on prostitutes' history and dress. This includes access to academic journals as well as relevant research papers, books, articles, photographs, and films. The next resources required are Qualtrics to gather my survey data, and SPSS to analyze the data. Another necessity is women who are strippers or prostitutes to interview as well access to the clubs in which they work. I may also need money to get into the strip clubs and to pay my interviewees for their time. Since the women at the club are there to work, payment will ensure that the time spent being interviewed will not detract from their pay or deter participation. I plan on using week one getting to know the women at the clubs and establishing who I want to approach based on their initial interest in research participation before discussion of pay. The last day of week one, I will offer 6 women at each of the clubs $50 for the first interview and another $50 if they choose to participate in the second follow up interview, which adds up to $100 for each of the 12 women. In addition to participants, I will also need access to the Otter Pro app or another transcription software to record and transcribe my interviews as well as a computer with Microsoft Word to store and analyze the data.

This research is intended to ameliorate the gap in academic studies on sex work, especially within its modern context. The stigma surrounding sex work and the hypocrisy towards female sexuality that have stemmed from objectification have also stifled the exploration of these topics. Dress and identity within sex work have been particularly overlooked, which is why this research is necessary. The goal of this study is to add to existing knowledge surrounding sex workers and their dress, dispel misconceptions, and provide an updated basis for future research.

Appendix A

Figure 1

"Hooker Chic" Look from Louis Vuitton 2013 Fall/Winter Collection

Note: From Phelps (2013). Vogue Runway. https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/fall-2013-ready-to-wear/louis-vuitton
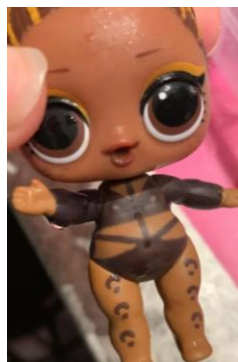
Figure 2

Collector Chloe Bratz Doll

Note: From Walmart.com https://www.walmart.com/ip/Collector-Doll-Cloe-Multicolor-Bratz-

Collector-doll-cloe-By-Bratz/825946948?athbdg=L1700

Figure 3

LOL Surprise Doll dipped in water

Note: From Darrah (2020). The Sun News. https://www.the-sun.com/news/1303717/lol-surprise-

dolls-cold-water-lingerie-appearance-controversy/

Figure 4

Frontispiece to George Ellington's "The Woman of New York, or the Underworld of the Great

City." (NY: New York Book Co., 1869)

Note: From Valverde (1989). Victorian Studies. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3827615

Figure 5

Madeline Baird, a seamstress arrested in 1915 for streetwalking.

Note: From Tandberg (1990). Women's Studies International Forum. Courtesy of the New

Orleans Public Library.

Figure 6

Photograph of a New Orleans prostitute by Ernest Bellocq.

Note: From Tandberg (1990). Women's Studies International Forum. Courtesy of Al Rose

Figure 7

New Orleans prostitute in striped stockings. Photograph by Ernest Bellocq.

Note: From Tandberg (1990). Women's Studies International Forum. Courtesy of Court Rose and Al Rose Collection, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Figure 8

Photograph of stripper's "pleasers" shoes

Note: From Infinite (2012), "Stripper's Guide to Marketing Joy and Selling Happiness."

https://www.business2community.com/marketing/strippers-guide-to-marketing-joy-and-selling-

happiness-0160773

Appendix B

Attitudes Towards Sex Work Scale

Please respond to each question regarding sex work (prostitution, stripping, porn, etc) based on the response that best fits your beliefs. The responses range from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

I believe that…

1. Sex work should be legalized

2. There is nothing wrong with sex work.

3. Sex work should be decriminalized.

4. Sex workers enjoy their work.

5. Sex workers genuinely like men.

6. Women are sex workers because they want to be. It is their choice.

7. Sex workers make a lot of money.

8. Most men go to sex workers once in a while.

9. If I were thinking about getting married, I would not mind marrying asex worker.

10. It would be okay if my daughter grew up to be a sex worker.

Perceptions of Sex Worker Dress Scale

I believe that sex worker's fashion is…

Provocative …Modest

Cheap…Expensive

Outdated…Modern

Trashy…Classy

Unfashionable…Stylish

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

First, introduce self, explain the study and confidentiality, and have participants sign consent forms. Second, ask demographic and background information of: name, age, race, place of origin, and years in sex work. Third, ask participants the questions below. Last, thank them for their time and give my contact info again.

1. How did you get into the sex industry?

2. What has your experience in the sex industry been like?

3. What are the best parts of being a sex worker? The worst parts?

4. What do you wear to work?

5. Do you change how you dress for work depending on the situation? (Ex. where, what time, who the client is, ect.) If so, how?

6. How does your work dress compare to your everyday dress?

7. How do people usually respond when they find out you work in the sex industry?

8. What does your family think about your profession?

9. Do you see any common misconceptions regarding sex work?

10. Is there anything else you think is important to know about sex work?

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