

## Street Harassment or Stripping: Which is Worse?

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## STRANGER HARASSMENT AND STRIPPING

"[W]omen suffer unpunished and uncompensated sexual assaults continually. Women who live in urban areas and walk rather than drive or take taxis endure tortious or criminal sexual assaults *daily*. Although we have a trivializing phrase for these encounters -- "street hassling" -- these assaults are not at all trivial. They are frightening and threatening whispered messages of power and subjection. They are, in short, assaults. Yet, men who harass women on the street are not apprehended, they are not punished, the victims are not compensated, and no damages are paid. The entire transaction is entirely invisible to the state" (West 106).

### Abstract

Are women in public treated by strangers as civilian strippers, although, unlike real strippers, they are unpaid and unsecured? How do we account for the depth of our judgements against those who engage in stripping, considering how similar and worse women's daily experience is walking down the street? This paper attempts to compare the experience of a woman walking down the street experiencing stranger harassment with that of a stripper at work. The first hypothesis states that the scenario involving street harassment would be given worse quality ratings than that of the stripper in a workplace scenario. The second hypothesis states that women who are not strippers will perceive the experience of stripping to be worse than the lived experience of the dancers themselves. In order to investigate these hypotheses, two surveys were conducted, both were given to both strippers and non-strippers. One survey included a narrative involving street harassment and the other survey included a narrative involving a stripper at work. Participants were asked to rate their emotional responses. Even in 2016, the harmful nature of street stranger harassment is a relatively recently and minimally researched phenomenon, but its prevalence has been clear for years. This paper attempts to expose its harmful nature as well as redirect attention from topics such as stripping, which far fewer people experience and which often leads to fewer negative consequences.

**Keywords:** Stranger harassment, exotic dancer/stripper (*used interchangeably*), objectification, agency

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### Stranger Harassment and Stripping: Which is Worse?

Stranger harassment is a prevalent and harmful experience that the majority of women experience at least once and - more often than not - frequently. Stripping is a highly stigmatized arena that, too, deals with interactions with strangers. While the intent of this paper is not to endorse stripping, it is to show that the highly prevalent experience that nonconsenting women have of stranger harassment contributes more negatively to their life experience than does stripping in scenarios where the worker is consenting, has security to protect her, and is being paid to engage in the experience. Agency in objectification plays a key role in the difference between the two experiences. To date, the topic of stranger harassment has had minimal attention due possibly to the lack of available actions of legal recourse for the perpetrator.

### Literature Review

#### Stranger Harassment

Stranger harassment can be defined as public sexual harassment including, "both verbal and nonverbal behavior, such as wolf-whistles, leers, winks, grabs, pinches, catcalls, and stranger remarks; the remarks are frequently sexual in nature and comment evaluatively on a woman's physical appearance or on her presence in public" (Bowman 1993). It is a phenomenon that primarily affects women and is perpetrated by men (70% of women who have experienced street harassment report being harassed by a man). A 2014 national study of 1,000 women ages 18 and up showed that more than two out of three women have experienced street harassment -- 86% of whom have been harassed more than once. 57% of women have experienced verbal harassment, and 41% have experienced physically aggressive harassment, including assault (23%) (Kearl 2014). According to a 2008 study by Fairchild and Rudman, approximately 41% of their sample reported having experiences at least once a month with

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unwanted sexual attention from strangers, and 31% reported experiencing stranger harassment every few days or more (Fairchild & Rudman 2008). Stranger harassment is more common than sexual harassment perpetrated by men known to the victim (MacMillan 2000). The prevalence of this experience for women is striking.

The negative implications of sexual harassment and, more specifically, stranger harassment are documented. Objectification is a critical component of stranger harassment, which can be defined as the separation of a social person from their physical body in order to be consumed by others (Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). In their 1996 study, McKinley and Hyde construct the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale, which exams three experiences and beliefs of oneself that make up the *objectified body consciousness*: surveillance (viewing the body as an outside observer), body shame (feeling shame when the body does not conform to cultural body standards), and a belief that one can control one's own appearance. In their study, all three components caused for lowered body esteem as well as strong correlation with eating disorders (McKinley & Hyde 1996). These negative experiences psychologically, economically and politically affect masses of women across the U.S. (Wolf 1991). The following is a model of key objectification theory tenets (Szymanski, Moffitt & Carr 2011):

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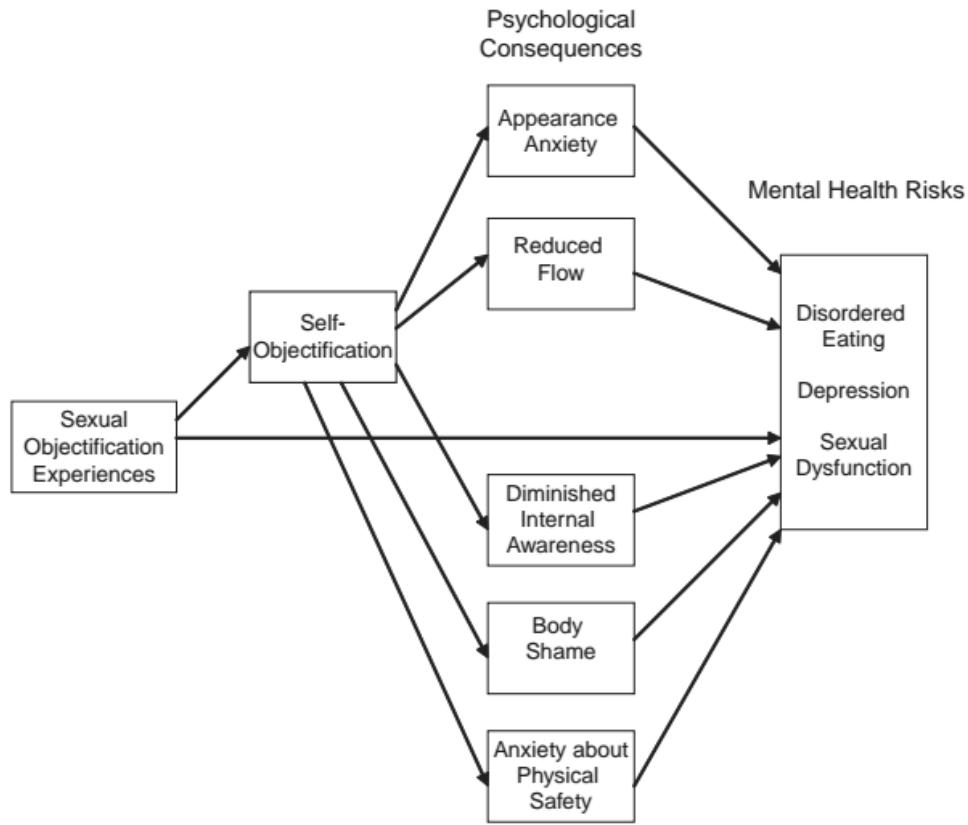


Figure 1

Stranger harassment has been shown to limit mobility, as it instills fear of rape in walking in certain places alone at night, the use of public transportation, etc. (Fairchild & Rudman 2008). Studies show that women who experience high levels of sexual harassment experience more negative psychological outcomes than those who do not experience this level of harassment (Schneider et al, 1997).

The legal implications of stranger harassment are limited because the individual instances are so fleeting and are thought to be of minimal significance. General sexual harassment, on the other hand, though difficult in and of itself to prosecute, can be viewed in more controlled circumstances: school, work, home, etc. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights of Act of 1964 states: "It shall be an unlawful employment practice for an employer . . . to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment,

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because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin" (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(a)(1), (1991)).

When dealing with instances outside of these realms - circumstances that are not traditionally policed - women have little protection and they are aware of this reality: "Women... currently experience shouted insults, determined trailing, and pinches and grabs by strange men and [are] fairly certain that no one—not the perpetrator and probably no official—will think anything of note has happened" (Fairchild & Rudman, 4). There are, however, some circumstances that are arising in which governments are choosing to intervene by explicitly separating women from from. In the mid-2000s, a study in Japan showed that nearly two-thirds of women in their 20s and 30s have been groped while riding the Tokyo subway, and report feeling "degraded, humiliated, and frightened" ("Japan" 2005), as a result. In response, the Japanese government started offering female-only subway cars because the male groping epidemic. The same measure was implemented in Brazil to deal with their epidemic.

### Stripping

Exotic dance, or stripping, is a component of the sex industry. Stripping can be broadly described as a profession in which an individual is paid to remove their clothing. While there are plenty of strippers who work outside of strip clubs, this paper will focus on those who work within the clubs. This paper will also focus on female strippers in heterosexual clubs, though various other forms of stripping do exist and are very important in the understanding of the gender and sexuality components from a cultural perspective. Strip clubs and their employees vary in styles and rules.

Schlosser (1997) and Hanna (1998) give an overview of some of the technical dynamics:

"Diversity and complexity include dancer's physical appearance, motivation, background, and behavior. Some clubs have "feature" dancers who can quadruple the regular dancer ("house girl") income. Feature

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dancers are paid, for the most part, according to the "credits" they have accumulated for appearing in adult magazine centerfold photograph spreads and/or in videos, for which they collect "scalps" -- their photo on video box covers. Through agents, features make guest appearances in clubs on nationwide circuits. The nation's top five or six feature dancers earn \$15,000 to \$20,000 per week performing four 20-minute shows each night. Another five or six earn between \$8,000 and \$15,000 per week" (Hanna 42, Schlosser 47).

These women "gender" themselves – that is, they create the image of a perceived gender. They play the performance of a "woman" by dressing and acting in traditional female roles. In the context of a strip club, this behavior is in direct correlation with behaving as a sexualized woman, as the consumers are heterosexual men. All in all, strip clubs with heterosexual male customers sell the sexual woman. The dancers alter their gendering in order to make as much money as they can. These roles differ based on the race and class of the customers and therefore, the experience is gendered, sexualized, classed and raced.

Strip clubs as establishments are primarily organized based on class. This paper will generalize the establishments into lower-class and higher-class. The personal class of the individuals present in each club, whether they are a customer or a worker, is in fact irrelevant – the centerpiece of strip clubs is façade. If a woman can make herself look and behave in a certain fashion during her work shift, she can potentially fit into any club. If a man does not have enough money to pay his rent but can afford the \$40 cover charge for a higher-class club, he still can enter as a customer.

The clubs themselves, however, do cater to specific images. The class of a strip club depends on its geographic location/safety, the lighting and sound quality, the quality of furniture, the size of the establishment, cleanliness, and food quality, as well as a whole range of other qualities. The most important of these qualities is that of the "class" of the strippers themselves. Male customers determine what clubs to attend based on what they perceive to be the cultural and educational capital of a dancer, dependent on factors such as her weight, race, amount of

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makeup, amount of perfume, tan skin, breast implants, etc. Dance and music style are also key contributing factors in the man's choice of venue. A dancer describes the weight of such specifications, "When [the present owner] first bought The Oasis [a high class strip club], he really wanted to target like age 30 and up, white-collared-class businessmen. So he said that all the girls had to wear gowns or dresses on stages, and we're only going to play 80s music. That was his way to appeal to that age group" (Trautner, 2005, 779).

A dancer's physique significantly informs her options of where to work. The dancers do gender and sexuality through their appearance and presentation, but also class insofar as the more they distance themselves from a lower-class appearance, the more money they make. Trautner posits that the dancers do this "while at the same time conforming to, legitimating, and perpetuating dominant cultural ideals" (Trautner, 2005, 778), and therefore support heterosexual, male dominated culture. In other words, in order for a dancer to be the most successful she can be, she must look as "high-class" as possible. To that end, she must, in effect, step on other women in order to reach the highest point possible on the class ladder at which point she receives her reward: the man's money. The image is of women climbing on top of each other in an ironically classless spectacle in order to please "the man".

There are many, many reasons why heterosexual men go to strip clubs. To skim the surface, some of these reasons include the near impossibility of being rejected by a woman, the ease of talking to an attractive woman who might not otherwise engage if they were in a regular nightclub, being able to look at naked women whom they find to be attractive, and some attend strip clubs in order to defy new gender roles/pressures to end male privilege.

Higher-class clubs aim to portray the fantasy image for the male customers: "They appear to make every effort to insulate customers from everyday reality by providing them with a safe haven in which they can desire and appreciate women and act and be treated like

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‘gentlemen’’ (Edgley 1989, Trautner 2005). In both strip clubs and casinos, it is uncommon to find any windows. This is a technique used, in both instances, to make the customers feel that they exist in a fantasy world that is beyond the real world. The more engrossed they feel in this fantasy world, the less they think about how much money they are spending. In contrast to the higher-class strip clubs, the lower-class clubs, “...create an atmosphere conducive to pure physical pleasure and lust. ...the sexuality on display is often more interactive than is seen at [higher-class] clubs. These clubs are havens for the viewing of women as sex objects, for the imagining of these women as sexual partners, and for the enactment of male power” (Liepe-Levinson 1998; Wood 2000; Trautner 2005). These clubs are more accessible to what can be considered the average, working man.

There is a significant discrepancy among men who attend strip clubs about the depth in the meanings behind their attendance at the club. Many men do not feel concerned about their public moral standing vis-à-vis attending strip clubs, but rather feel increased excitement from the mysterious secrecy. Conversely, regulars at high-class clubs are by and large conservative men who are secretive about their visits (Lerum 2004). Adding the nuance of perspective, others believe strip clubs are in fact, “supportive of heterosexual monogamy (although pushing at its borders’’ (Frank, 2002, p106), since sexual release is (usually) not part of the bargain, and since the relationship between customer and stripper are (usually) confined within the walls of the club” (Lerum, 2004, p46).

The psychology of the male patrons at strip clubs is an entirely separate topic. This psychology is full of paradoxes: to pay for sex is emasculating, yet having the money to pay and get private rooms with strippers expresses masculinity. In the strip club, so much of the social interaction is, surprisingly, among the men. Men spend money all the while remaining aware of the other men watching. Despite that the entire setting of a strip club is a performance, many

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men in strip clubs continue the delusion of seeing each other as competitors for money and the subsequent women that come with that money. Additionally, these men ironically attempt to seek authenticity with the dancers (i.e. knowing a dancer's real name; having her sit with him without asking for money; says to other men that they're friends even though it is a one-ended friendship). In accordance, dancers frequently set up fake home phones as work phones and remember the names and the preferences of those customers to make them feel special even though they are simply a means to a financial end.

*Stigma, Criticism and Rebuttal*

There is much opposition to strip clubs, stripping and strippers. Sex workers exist on a spectrum ranging from children who are forced to perform sexual acts to adults who voluntarily engage with the work. This spectrum articulates the ways that the sex industry can be extremely volatile - supporting exploitation, subordination, a perpetuation of violence mostly against women - or a relatively normative working class job. Erving Goffman defines a stigmatized individual as one who is "reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to tainted, discounted one" (Goffman 3). Despite its legal status, stripping is immoralized and stigmatized by the state, the general public, many customers and management (Hunt 213).

Though they come to this point from different reasons, attempts to control the stripping industry come primarily from the Religious Right and certain feminists. In 1995, in response to a striptease portion being added to the Shenandoah County Fair in Woodstock, Virginia, the Woodstock TV station ceased to air the fair the after 10 years because, as published in their paper, "We felt that by encouraging attendance, we would be flying in the face of Scripture, which specifically states that looking on a woman with lust is the same as committing adultery" (Hanna 53).

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Other Religious Right groups include the Christian Coalition (approximately 1.9 million members), American Family Association, The Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America, Coral Ridge Ministries, and Washington Together Against Pornography. The National Family Legal Foundation trained 1,000 attorneys in 1,000 cities on how to argue against the stripping industry. These groups are "well-organized, they prepare how-to publications and workshops. In response to calls for "community standards," cities pass ordinances that are frequently based on those drafted by [religious groups]" (Hanna 53). These Religious Right organizations expose their intent for a male-dominated society by arguing in favor of controlling female actions (abortion, sex work, etc.) while simultaneously arguing for small government. They support the belief that a woman's body should only be consumed by a husband (Hanna 53).

Feminist beliefs in opposition to stripping range from the conceptual to the practical. One school of thought that it is economically coercive because dancers become willing to accept high wages for male abuse (Jaggar). Many feminists believe that the male gaze is the principal cause of women's oppression (Ellis et al.) and to commodify it is to directly support patriarchal dominance and the degradation of women. Hanna adds "Looking back to the mid-19th century, many in the feminist movement had antipathy toward female sexuality and the burlesque dancer. These feminists agreed that if women were going to achieve sexual equality, they had to control sexual passion and carefully regulate, rationalize, and channel it exclusively into procreation" (55).

A more practical-based belief in opposition to stripping is that it can be dangerous in that club owners and managers - who are supposed to be protectors - exploit the women, as can sometimes be the case. However, people in these positions of power can and are often female, which complicates the argument as a specifically feminist, anti-patriarchal one. If the clubs are

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considered to be strippers' "pimps", the same logic and standard must be applied to hair stylists and real estate agents who pay their firms to hold their positions.

Both the far right and certain feminist groups seek to achieve political reform. In the 1991 Supreme Court case *Barnes v. Glen Theatre, Inc.*, the Court identified nude dancing under the First Amendment protection of expression, but allowed Indiana to strip this protection in the interest of "order and morality" due to harmful secondary effects (i.e. prostitution, sexual assault, associated crimes and neighborhood blight). Legal arguments have been used defining stripping in terms of criminal "obscenity," "public indecency," or "lewd conduct". Zoning and licensing requirements have been implemented to stunt the industry, prohibiting adult facilities within 1,000 feet of residential zone.

Arguments against criticism of stripping are also wide-ranging and both conceptual and practical in nature. These arguments are both in favor of stripping and specifically oppose opposition to it, arguing that it can be the lesser of many other evils that come with living in a patriarchal society outside the confines of a club. Stripping falls under the category of a working-class occupation, and, though it may or may not be enjoyable to the worker, many working-class occupations are not enjoyable and are subsidized at a far lower rate. Hanna reflects:

"Exotic dance as subordination, disempowerment, and sexual exploitation? Some young women see exotic dance as antiestablishment, a feminist act, and a strike against patriarchy -- making it pay. Voyeurism is not done against the woman's will; rather it is made possible through her willfulness. In everyday life women are watched, like it or not (Berger 1972). Men, too, are objects of the gaze of men and women in the perpetual athletic domain" (Hanna 57).

This points to the role that objectification plays in many arenas- among them athletes and soldiers.

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To the point that stripping legitimizes the male gaze, Bruckert counters that: "Traditional analysis of the skin trades, whether feminist or not, assumes and reinforces the male gaze, effectively reifying and legitimating the woman worker as sexual. As problematic as this is, the reverse -- the total denial of the sexuality -- is equally unrealistic. It is also inaccurate" (Bruckert 55). Bruckert shows here that to deny the role of sexuality in the outside world is an inaccurate assessment of reality. One of the most crucial arguments opposing opposition to stripping as that many dancers experience sexual harassment outside of the club more than inside (Hanna 57).

"I was treated better in the club than in the accounting office where I had formerly worked and experienced constant harassment. Besides, I like being an independent entrepreneur. I work when I want, and earn money by doing a striptease on stage and then table dancing, which for me is primarily sitting with wealthy professional and business men who just want to talk" (Misty 203).

To the argument that strip clubs create unsafe neighborhoods and depreciate their value: extensive research in California, Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, and Washington finds no evidence of this claim. These establishments are often official and professional corporations. In 1995, Rick's Cabaret became a publicly traded corporation on Nasdaq, with 1.6 million shares selling at \$3 each. "During a 60-day period in 1994, the club turned up 584 separate uses of corporate credit cards issued by Fortune 500 Companies and some by governmental agencies (AVN 1995)" (Hanna 62).

To the argument that nudity is inherently immoral, Hanna (1998) and Allen (1991) counter that acceptable bodily displays have changed over time. In the 1800s, legs needed to be covered even for swimming. In 1827, a ballet dancer was criticized for wear loose pants covered by a long skirt (Allen 89).

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To contradict the collection of arguments surrounding objectification, art and the First Amendment that were brought to the Supreme Court, a former exotic dancer and doctoral candidate in women's studies argued: "How can someone constructed as an object be seen as initiating art? This is exclusively the province of a subject" (Clipperton 4). She traces this moralization of women's nudity to the Victorian Era, where women were sexually pure and men were sexually aggressive- thereby developing the double standard of morality.

Anthropologists have recorded many strippers' feeling that the real degradation surrounding their work occurs in the societal stigmatization from their neighbors and family (Hanna 58). In her book *A Woman's Right to Pornography*, Wendy McElroy states that "exploitation will stop when it is vigorously prosecuted everywhere it occurs... Why is a naked female more of an 'object' than a clothed one? ... If women's choices are to be trashed, why should radical feminists fare better than other women?" (McElroy 108).

Arguments are also made in favor of stripping that are not in relation to its criticism. Strippers experience positive aspects of stripping such as the art of dance, watching themselves in the mirror and enjoying themselves in that experience, celebration of female body/sexuality, self-empowerment, economic opportunity, the thrill of being on stage, and physical exercise. Many workers see themselves as part of a pro-sex movement that liberates women and allows them to regain agency over their bodies. "[Credit for some of women's gain in sexual freedom over the past hundred years] must go to sexual entertainers, for it is impossible to make this kind of gain without women who are willing to work on the cutting edge of sexual change" (Dragu & Harrison 55). The following are quotes from various strippers reflecting on their work:

Nancy: "It is an interesting dynamic to have almost total control over a man and his wallet by manipulating him with your sexual energy" (Reifel 43).

Misty: "One woman, and from a few to a few hundred men, all wanting her, desiring her, lustng after her. For a few moments she rules them. In a sexual relationship, the woman is always strong at the moment when

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the man most desires her, and she is holding back; but once she succumbs to him, she is at his mercy for her physical release. This does not happen in stripping. Man remains with his need and woman walks out on him" (Misty 204).

Overall, the role of agency and ownership of one's own body is critical to the experience of stripping or any form of objectification as a positive one. If a woman's agency is taken away, sex work can be considered to be criminal. Assuming strip clubs function as they should and generally do, this criminal action does not occur. Therefore, the argument that stripping is a cause of abuse of women is a fallacy. The argument, however, that abuses can occur and need to be prosecuted is a valid one. There is a need for strippers to unify and be legitimized by society in order to avoid such workplace abuses.

**Method**

In this pilot study, two convenience surveys were administered through [www.SurveyMonkey.com](http://www.SurveyMonkey.com) to two demographics of women, each demographic answered both surveys, and each individual received only one survey in order to minimize bias. Participants were contacted individually through the researcher's social media (a collection of individuals from across the world and of varying socioeconomic status), through the personal connections of strip club managers from regions including Cleveland and New York City, and was posted on an online forum for strippers ([www.stripperweb.com](http://www.stripperweb.com)). In total, 80 participants answered the street narrative survey and 111 participants answered the club narrative survey.

The two surveys included one narrative each: that of a woman walking down the street being harassed by a stranger and that of a stripper at work engaging with a customer in a regular transaction. Participants were asked to imagine themselves as the character in the story. The two groups of respondents included women who are or have ever been strippers and women who are not and have never been strippers. Of the 80 who responded to the former, 30

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(37.5%) identified as dancers and 50 (62.5%) identified as non-dancers. Of the 111 who responded to the latter, 49 (44.14%) identified as dancers and 62 (55.86%) identified as non-dancers.

Both surveys included an introductory explanation of the study: "This is an informal study I'm conducting for a course at The New School University. I'm studying how women feel about different experiences they have with strangers. There are no right answers, the survey is encrypted and your identities are completely anonymous. Thanks so much for your help!" The next question asked if the participant identifies as a woman, and the final question involved the narrative. Participants were asked to, "Imagine you are the woman in this story:" and were then directed to one of the two following narratives:

The street narrative is as follows:

*"I'm walking down the street. I notice a man coming up on the right who is looking at me. Without making eye contact, I notice him smile. As I walk by him, he whistles at me and says something I do not hear clearly. After I have passed him, I reach my destination. When I open the door, I look back at the man and see that he is still looking in my direction, smiling."*

The club narrative is as follows:

*"I'm working at a strip club, dancing on stage. I notice a man on the right of the stage looking at me. Without making eye contact, I notice him smile. As I get off stage, I pass him and he whistles and says something I do not hear clearly. I ask him if he wants a dance and he says yes. We walk to a couch where he sits down. I dance in front of him as he smiles at me. When the song is over, he pays me the agreed upon \$20 for the dance."*

After reading the narrative, participants were asked to rate specific feelings they experienced on a Likert scale of 1-3 (1 = I don't feel this, 2 = I somewhat feel this, 3 = I feel this strongly). The feeling-responses consisted of the following: flattered, harassed, comfortable, uncomfortable, successful, taken advantage of, attractive, violated, turned on and disgusted. An "other" fill-in option was offered. The survey was formulated with a primary focus on keeping it concise in

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order to maximize the number of responses. The list of positive and negative emotions was collected through personal experience with these emotions and common terminology used by others in informal interviewing.

## Results

Street narrative with strippers:

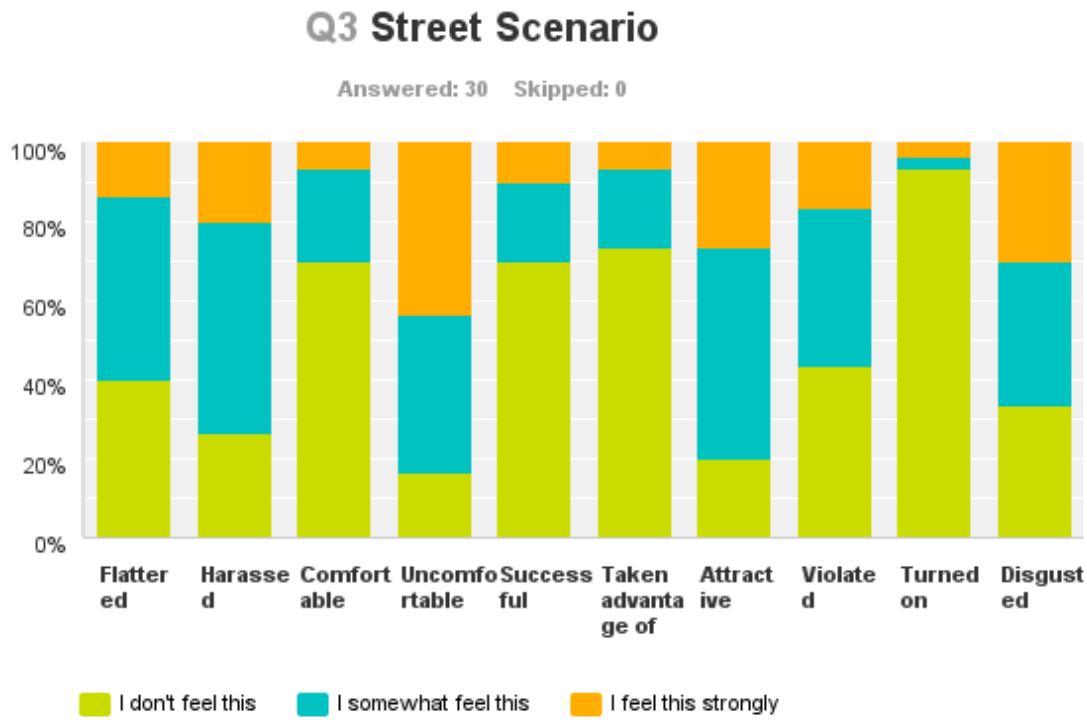


Figure 2a

These results show that, amongst strippers, the negative emotions were experienced more strongly when being harassed on the street than the positive emotions. The participants felt particularly strongly in their levels of discomfort, disgust, attractiveness and harassment.

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Street narrative with non-stripers:

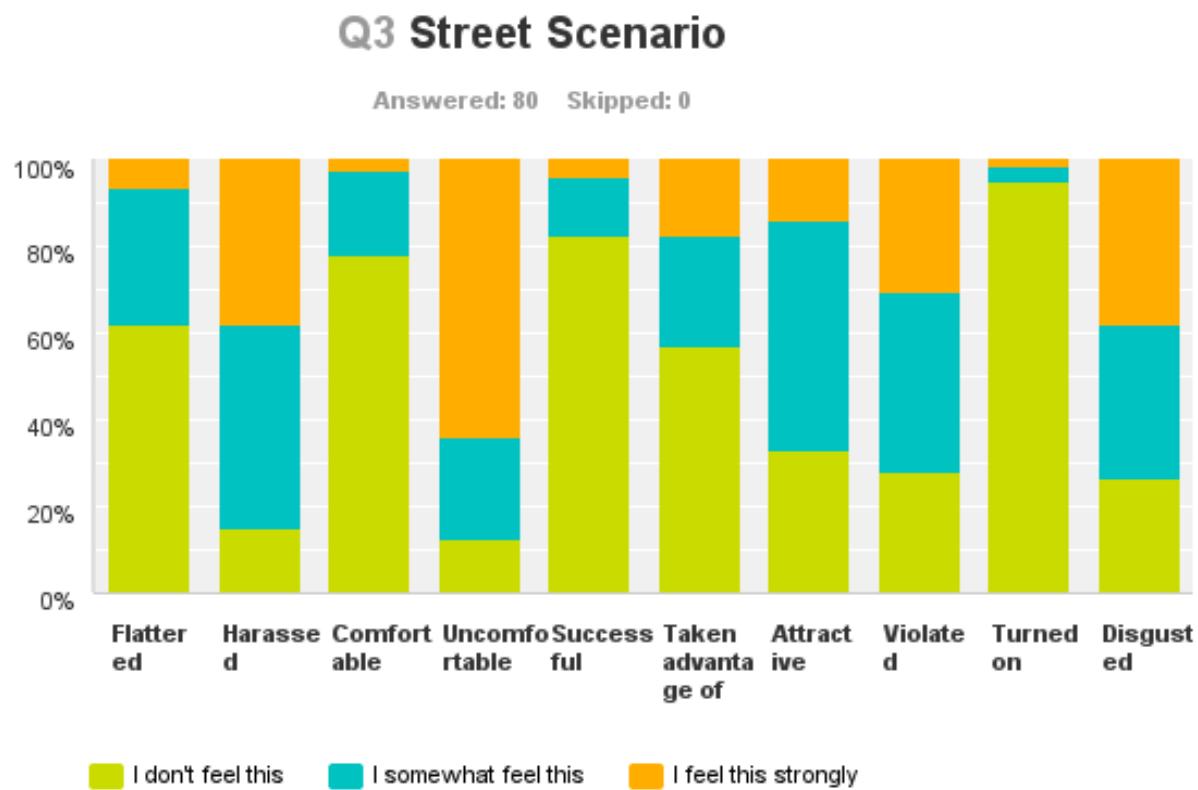


Figure 2b

These results show similarly to the first that, among non-stripers, the negative emotions were experienced more strongly when being harassed on the street than the positive emotions. Participants felt particularly harassed, uncomfortable, violated and disgusted. Many felt somewhat attractive as well.

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Total street narrative responses:

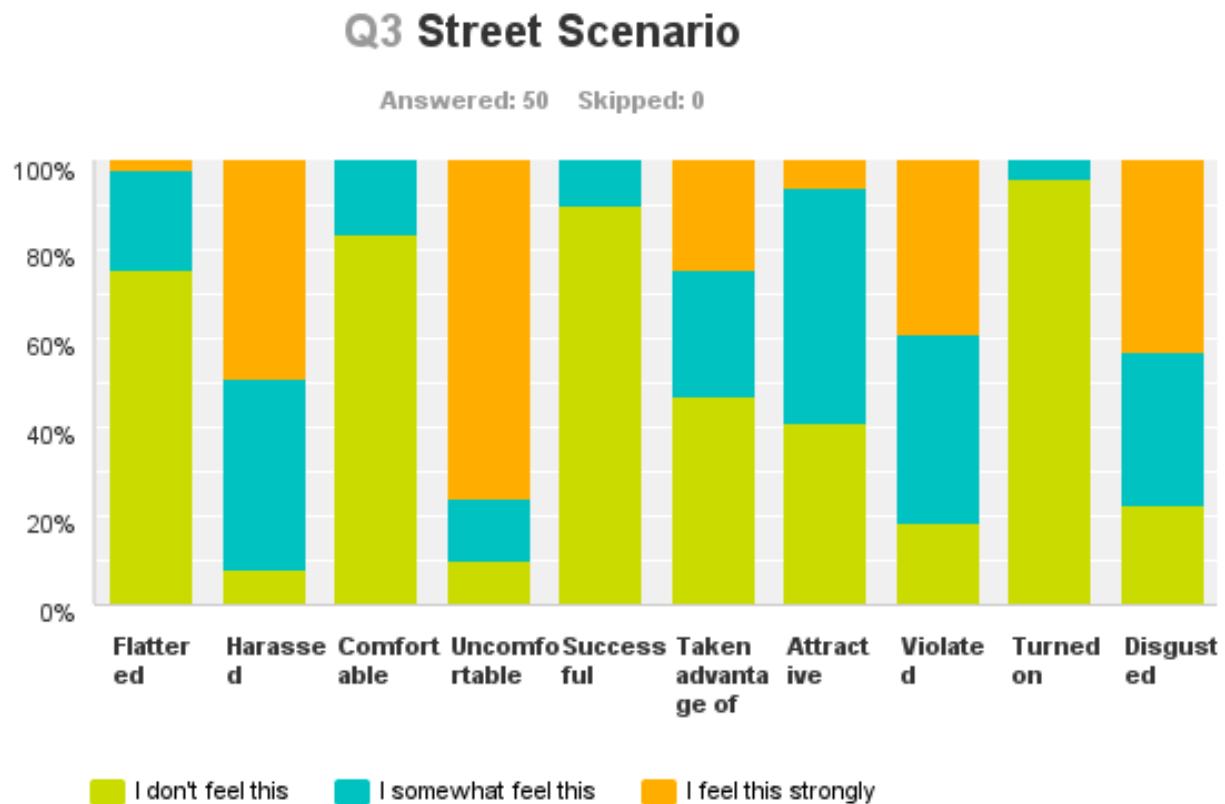


Figure 3c

These results show that amongst strippers and non-strippers, the emotions felt strongest when being harassed on the street are harassed, uncomfortable, violated and disgusted. Participants also felt somewhat attractive.

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Club scenario with strippers:

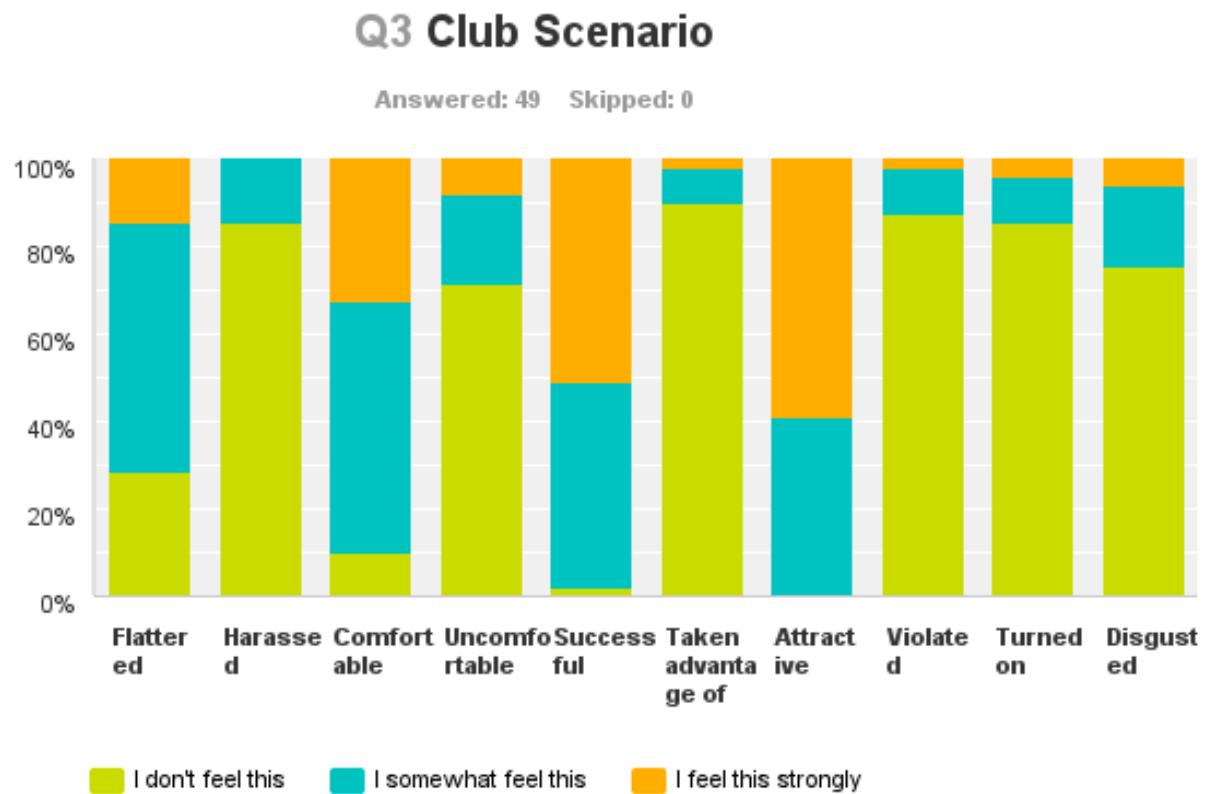


Figure 3a

These results show that, amongst strippers, the positive emotions were experienced more strongly when experiencing a transaction at work than the negative emotions. The participants felt particularly strongly in their levels of comfort, success and attractiveness. Many felt somewhat flattered and attractive.

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Club scenario with non-stripers:

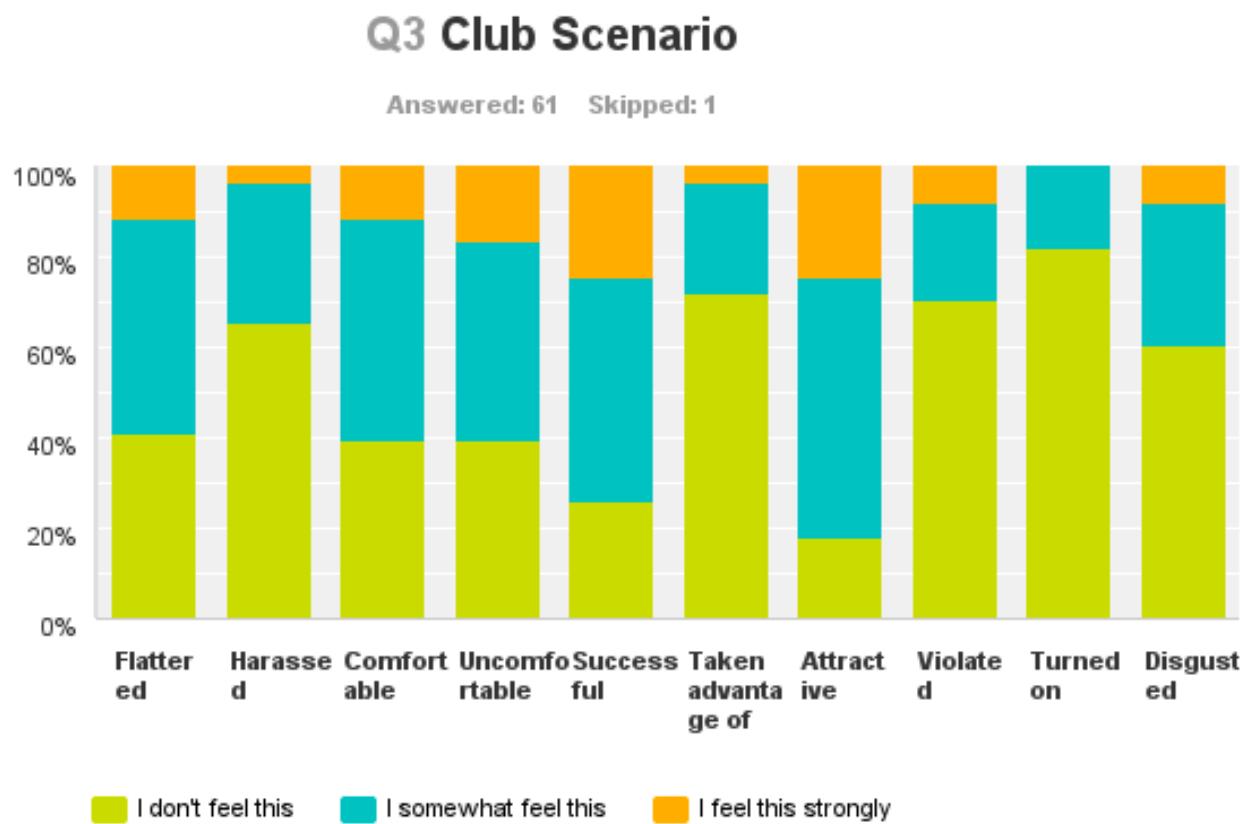


Figure 3b

More than anything else, these results point to non-stripers' inability to relate to the scenario with significantly strong emotions. This reaction, as discussed later, is reasonable and a flaw in methodology of asking a participant to put themselves in another person's shoes.

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Total club scenario responses:

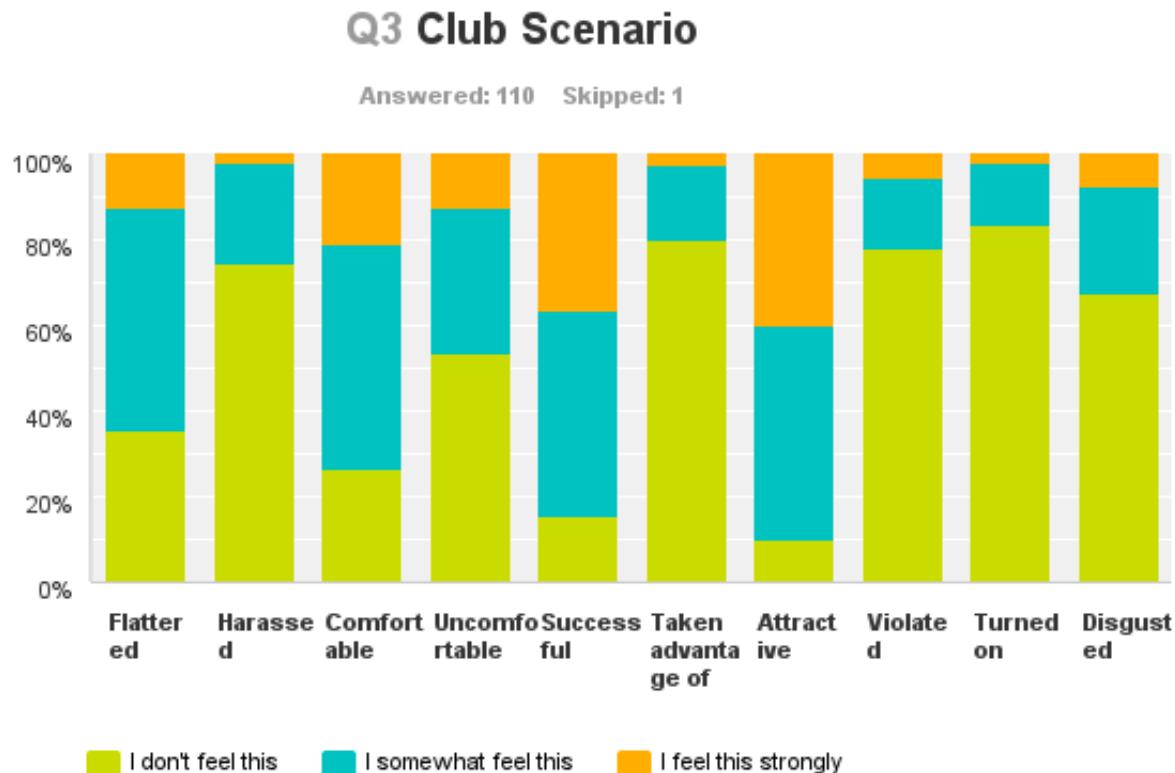


Figure 3c

Figure 3c illustrates both non-strippers' and strippers' response to the club scenario. As previously stated, the methodological flaw renders this data less valuable, but strong positive emotions can be associated with the club narrative. This is shown in stronger feelings of success, comfort and attractiveness.

The comments section proved to be very useful, particularly regarding the respondents' experience of fear.

**Non-dancers' comments on club narrative:**

- “I think this is difficult because in the scenario this whole interaction is part of a job that I signed up for so even though in another situation I might feel harassed or angry in this one I am a participant in the encounter so I would feel less violated.”
- “I would never be an exotic dancer. There is no reason for me to feel anything in response to this man because I would never put myself in that situation. If I had chosen

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to be in that situation, then I could not feel any negative emotions because I chose, of my own accord, to be there.”

**Dancers' comments on club narrative:**

- “Knowing that its for work purposes, and this is how men behave in a strip club, I don't feel violated or harassed. But if a man cat calls me on the street, I would feel more harassed and uncomfortable, sincentives I don't feel that is polite or socially acceptable outside a female entertainment enviroment.”

**Non-dancers' comments on street narrative:**

- “Unsafe”
- “Concerned”
- “Depends on what he said- I don't mind a smile and hello, but any sexual comment makes me uncomfortable”
- “I strongly feel afraid”
- “I also feel nervous”
- “I feel scared that he knows where I live. I feel guilty for adding he would hurt me without knowing him. And then I feel guilty for even giving him the benefit of the doubt, which puts meningitis danger. Spiral!!!!”
- “Afraid”
- “Afraid”
- “Annoyed”
- “Angry”

**Dancers' comments on street narrative:**

- “I don't need random guys rude validation. They can keep their opinions to themselves unless they are paying me to listen to them. “
- “As a stripper I want the attraction, but want to control it. Reaching the destination is a sense of security, and control. If dressed to impress, you have to expect attention from almost any source.”
- “Exhausted”
- “Angry, Pukey, Violent”

**Discussion**

The results supported hypothesis 1 strongly: participants experienced high levels of negative emotions after reading the street narrative than they did the club narrative. Less but still present data proves hypothesis 2: the perception of the strippers' work experience showed higher levels of negative emotions than the work experience of the dancers themselves. The

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weighted averages of the emotions of each survey with each demographic was calculated in order to show both the intensity of each emotion *and* how the emotion is felt in one survey in relation to another. Information regarding the two hypotheses is graphed as follows:

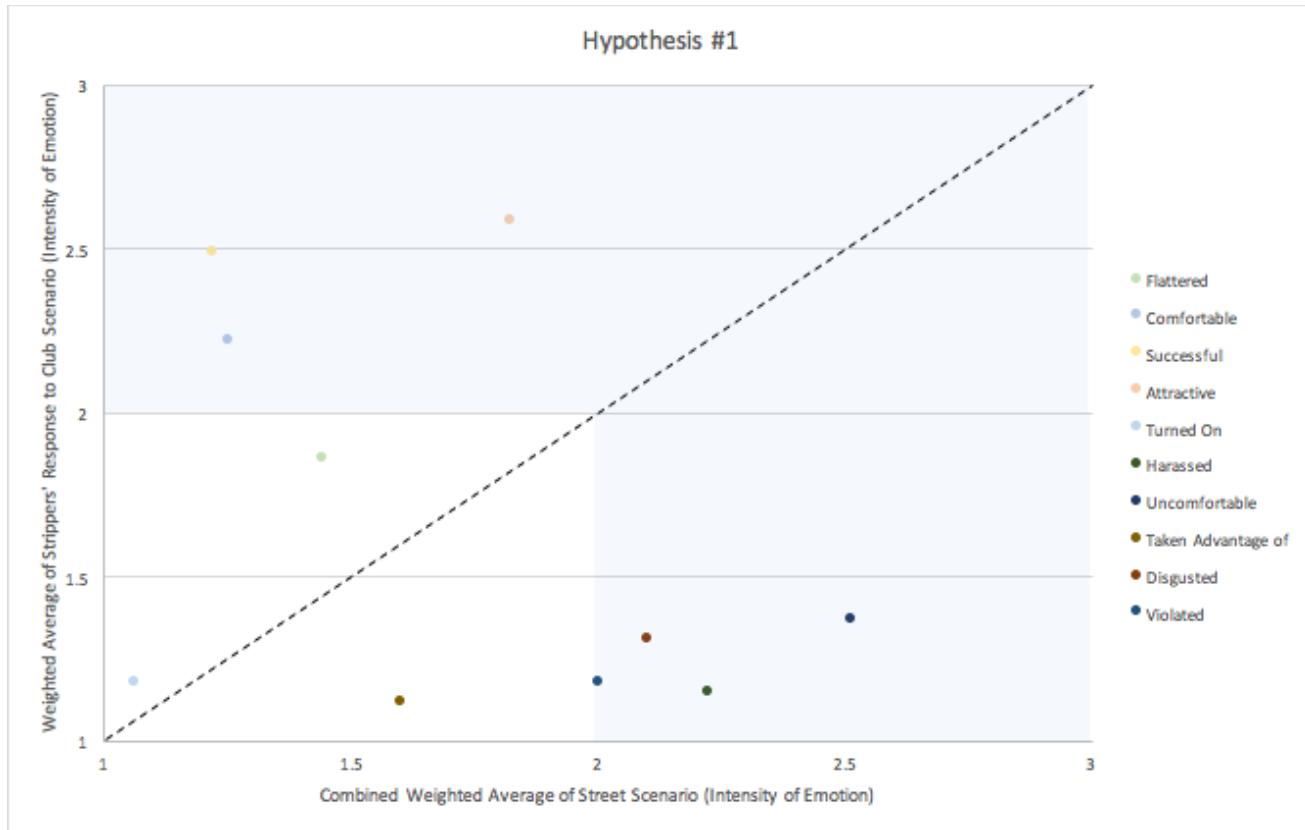


Figure 4a

The weighted averages of negative emotions were plotted in red and the positive emotions were plotted in black in order to discern the positive from negative feedback. The weighted averages express the strength of the emotions on a scale of 1 (I don't feel this) to 3 (I strongly feel this). The higher the plots are on the graph, the stronger the strippers' feelings are in the club narrative. The farther to the right the plots are, the stronger the all women felt in response to the street narrative. This graph shows that the strippers with the club narrative felt stronger positive emotions in comparison to that of the women (both strippers and non-strippers) with the street narrative. The stripper and non-stripper participants with the street scenario were combined on

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the x-axis of this graph because all women experience street harassment. The y-axis specifically deals with strippers in the club scenario in order to remove the outside perception responses of the non-strippers.

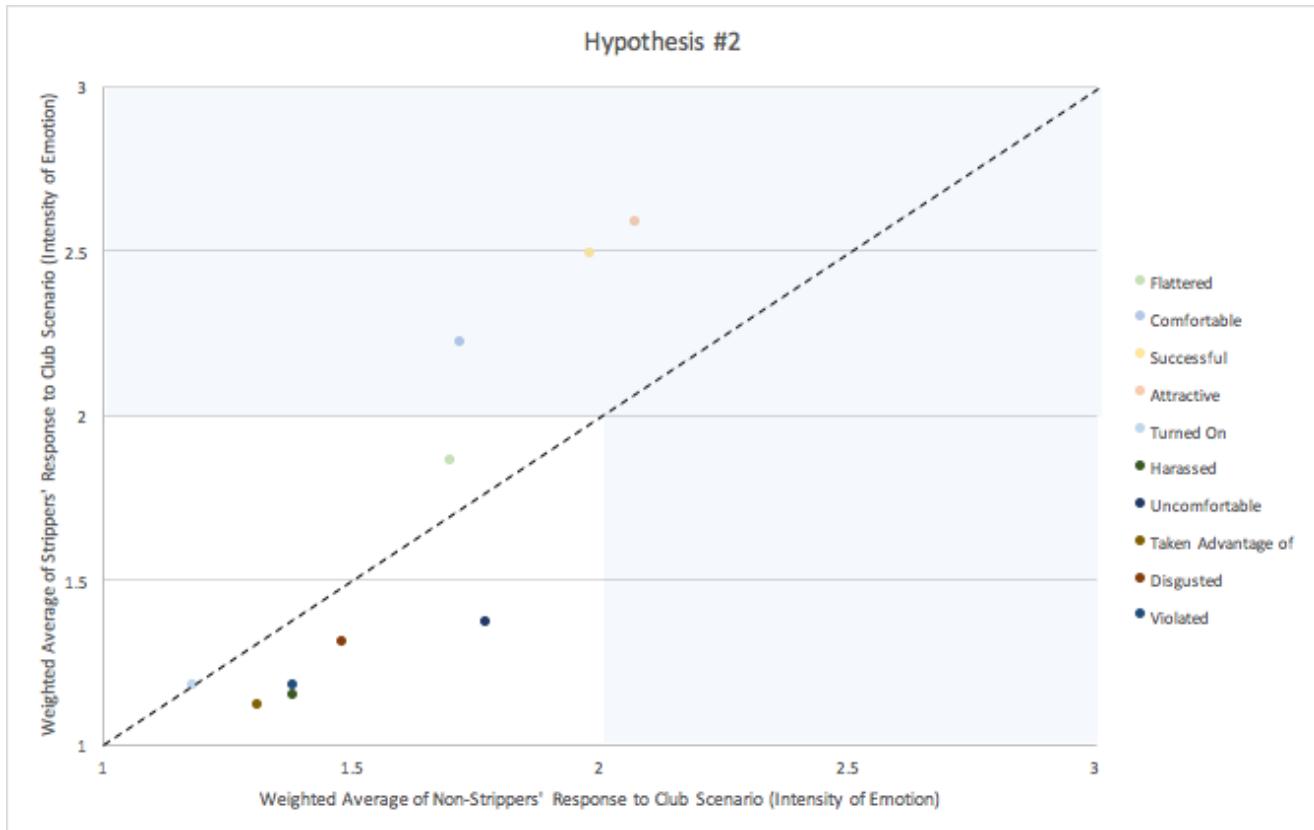


Figure 4b

The similar grouping in the second graph shows that the experience non-strippers imagined having as a stripper was worse than that of the experience of the strippers themselves. There is an inherent shortcoming in data collected through asking someone to put themselves in the shoes of something they are not (asking non-dancers to imagine being dancers at a strip club). As a result, this data was limited and the weighted average of the severity of emotion that this narrative caused non-dancers did not exceed 50%.

The volunteered expression of fear illustrated in the comments section depicts the depth of the epidemic of stranger harassment: a majority of women experience this form of

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harassment and they feel fear as a strong response. In response to the street harassment, seven of the ten people who volunteered comments wrote "afraid" or "unsafe" with various levels of intensity.

The following quote is from a respondent of the stripping scenario. This non-stripper illustrates the downsides of having a protectionist feminist perspective toward stripping:

"I would never be an exotic dancer. There is no reason for me to feel anything in response to this man because I would never put myself in that situation. If I had chosen to be in that situation, then I could not feel any negative emotions because I chose, of my own accord, to be there."

This respondent did not fill in any responses for any emotions. She removes empathy toward all strippers and removes their own agency to feel emotions in response to their experience. This form of protectionism toward women can lead to more harm than good and is, in and of itself, objectifying.

The following quote shows the relevance of context in objectification and, though this participant never saw the street survey narrative, summarized the thesis of this paper:

"Knowing that its for work purposes, and this is how men behave in a strip club, I don't feel violated or harassed. But if a man cat calls me on the street, I would feel more harassed and uncomfortable, since I don't feel that is polite or socially acceptable outside a female entertainment environment."

Though the grammar is not perfect, this stripper perfectly articulates the importance of when certain behavior is more harmful to the woman experiencing it than others. When a woman has agency and ownership of her body and when it is responded to, that is a positive experience. When a woman does not have agency and ownership of her body -- such as when being harassed on the street by strangers -- that is a negative experience.

This is a pilot study and should be contextualized as such. The convenience sample creates a potential bias in the data. The researcher's use of her Facebook friends as subjects likely caused for a lack in diversity on the progressive-conservative spectrum, as many of the

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researcher's friends are of progressive-leaning beliefs. On the other hand, those enlisted to compile responses from strippers are primarily of conservative-leaning beliefs.

One final question that ought to be raised is whether the negative effects of objectification exist even when the subject has control and agency over the objectifying. This is a valid criticism of stripping and one that can only be considered further if the extreme negative stigmas are lessened.

### Conclusion

Although strip clubs are strongly considered to be separate, pejorative structures, civilian women frequently, unknowingly and non-consensually get treated as civilian strippers without reaping the benefits of the reciprocal experience of employed stripping, such as regulation, payment and security. The lack of acknowledgement of this one-way sexual harassment phenomenon leads to a subsequent lack of regulation in the civilian environment, and the lines are blurred between when women exist as fellow members of society and when women exist as services to be consumed and therefore subsidized.

The stigmatization of women making money off of their sexuality is not coincidental and can quickly be traced back to a desire for conservative, religious men to maintain their dominance in society. This concept is complicated by the role of old-school feminists who feel similarly negative about the experience. However, their response can be criticized on a range of levels and is luckily based closer to the well-being of the women at hand than that of the former. With enough emphasis on agency and the reminder of why the stigma was brought about to begin with, those individuals have the potential to be swayed. The real predator is not the stripper -- the predator is the patriarchal notion of women as public space to be consumed for free and without agency.

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It is difficult to surmise what a world would look like if stripping was not actively stigmatized, as, “Behavior disapproved of by mainstream society is an integral part of the art, entertainment, and lure for performers and patrons alike” (Hanna 50). It is possible, therefore, that stripping and the sex industry more generally would altogether disappear if societal stigmas were removed. If this societal stigma was replaced with one that condemned the behavior of men who harass women, street harassment, too, could disappear. If one analyzes the actual experience of women and what they feel harms them, as this study has attempted to do, light can be shed on the real problems that over half of the population experience and more efficient work can be done to improve those circumstances.

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