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# Violence in Prostitution

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Violence in Prostitution

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## VIOLENCE IN PROSTITUTION

### Abstract

It is estimated that the majority of prostitutes are victims of violence, including rape and homicide. Some research has suggested that the clients of sex workers perpetrate most of these acts of violence. While several qualitative studies have examined specific incidents of violence, the prevalence and causes of violence in prostitution remain largely unaddressed by the existing literature. This study compares attitudes towards sexual violence and prostitution between men who have purchased sexual services and those who have not. Participants were 170 men recruited online, with 35 (20.6%) participants self-identifying as those who had previously purchased sex. Overall, a significant difference was found between the two groups on attitudes towards sexual violence, and no significant difference was found between groups for attitudes towards prostitution. These findings are discussed as they pertain to the legalization and criminalization of prostitution, intervention by law enforcement, and violence in prostitution.

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### **Introduction**

The high rates of physical and sexual violence prevalent in prostitution have been well-established (Chang & Weng, 2015; Farley & Barkan, 1998; Karandikar & Prospero, 2010; Monto, 2004). It is estimated that anywhere from two-thirds to 100% of prostitutes have been victims of violence (Bindel, Breslin, & Browne, 2013; Comte, 2014; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). Some researchers attribute the prevalence of violence in prostitution to social marginalization resulting from the illegal nature of the sex work industry (Chang & Weng, 2015). Others, particularly feminist theorists of the 1990s, consider violence as endemic to prostitution—that is, prostitution itself is violence (Dworkin, 1993; Weitzer, 2005). Regardless of their theoretical background, researchers lack a clear and evidence-based picture of why and how violence in prostitution occurs.

Extant research on prostitution tends to focus on female prostitutes, mostly from a public health perspective, and mostly in small qualitative studies (Monto, 2004; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). Yet within the past decade, research has increasingly examined the attitudes and behaviors of male clients of female prostitutes. The growing emphasis on clients stemmed from criticism of law enforcement, academics, and policymakers for focusing almost entirely on sex workers, rather than their patrons, during arrests and interventions (Comte, 2014; Mansson, 2006; Monto, 2004). This gendered trend in punishment continues, even though sex buyers (usually men) seem to outnumber sex sellers (usually women; Weitzer, 1999). In 2012, about 25,000 women were arrested for prostitution as compared to 12,000 men (including clients, pimps, and male prostitutes; FBI, 2012). A recent study of Harris County, Texas, revealed that women were somewhat more likely than men to be arrested for prostitution, and much more

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likely than men to receive a jail sentence instead of probation or a fine (Pfeffer, Ormachea, & Eagleman, 2017).

Increased targeting of clients helped initiate programs called “John Schools,” or interventions posited as an alternative to a criminal punishment for those who solicit services of prostitutes (Lovell & Jordan, 2012). Such programs usually require arrested men to pay a fee to attend workshops with former sex workers, healthcare experts, and law enforcement personnel. Research is mixed on the effectiveness of these programs. Lovell and Jordan (2012) argue that such programs are misguided—they address demand only, and target less experienced sex buyers, rather than addressing economic reasons that people enter the sex industry. These intervention programs provide a second catalyst for studying clients, since they bring a slice of a previously hidden population to a central, public location (Best Practices Policy Project, 2006; Lovell & Jordan, 2012; Monto, 1999; Monto, 2004).

### **Law Enforcement and Violence Against Prostitutes**

The ability of law enforcement to prevent sexual violence against prostitutes is complicated by the illegal context of prostitution. Protecting prostitutes from violence or other violations of their rights often takes a backseat to arresting them for selling sex (Cabezas, 2000). In some cases, violence against prostitutes is not registered as an offense, if reported at all (Deering et al., 2014). One qualitative study found that only 34% of prostitutes who had experienced violence from clients reported these incidents to law enforcement (Church et al., 2001). Prostitutes may fail to report violence because of threatened or actual verbal, physical, or sexual abuse at the hands of police, or because of fear of arrest (Deering et al., 2014; Karandikar & Próspero, 2010; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004).

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Interaction between law enforcement and prostitutes varies drastically, which influences rates of violence (Monto & Milrod, 2014). Overall, police arrest of prostitutes has been independently associated with higher levels of client-perpetrated violence (Deering et al., 2014). Because violent incidents are infrequently reported, this association is likely due to third variables such as outdoor venue or the criminalization of prostitution. However, police themselves may perpetrate violence against prostitutes as well. In one study of 222 Chicago-based sex workers, participants reported that police officers had perpetrated 24% of street-based rape (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). This body of research provokes questions about the nature of the relationship between law enforcement and prostitution.

### **Clients and Violence Against Prostitutes**

#### **Prevalence of Violence**

In 1995, Miller and Schwartz wrote that prostitutes are “essentially invisible” in the research on violence and rape (p. 3). Since then, some research on sexual violence against prostitutes has addressed this gap (Karandikar & Próspero, 2010). Yet no comprehensive, systematic data on violence against prostitutes exist. In fact, such data would be very difficult to collect for several reasons. These reasons include, but are not limited to, the illegal and marginalized nature of sex work, the severe underreporting of violent incidents by prostitutes, and the varying definitions of violence across the sex work literature (Comte, 2014; Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2012; Lowman & Atchison, 2006; Monto, 1999). A research participant recounting incidents of violence could be referring to a variety of sex work-related activities occurring in a variety of settings, making standardization difficult (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004).

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Despite these methodological issues and the overarching lack of research, it is widely accepted that prostitutes are at extraordinarily high levels of risk for becoming victims of physical and sexual violence (Comte, 2014; Miller & Schwartz, 1995; Monto, 1999). One study found that 93.8% of those interviewed reported some type of sexual assault while working in street prostitution, and 75% had been raped by a client (Miller & Schwartz, 1995). A study of 130 street-based prostitutes in San Francisco found that 68% had been raped and 82% had been physically assaulted while working (Farley & Barkan, 1998). Clients of prostitutes may view a narrower range of behaviors as rape if the victim is a prostitute, or view prostitutes as unrapeable (Miller & Schwartz, 1995).

Current research measuring violence against female sex workers has focused on victims, not perpetrators (Monto, 2004; Monto & McRee 2005; Semple, Strathdee, Pitpitan, Chavarin, & Patterson, 2015). Estimates of violence rates have relied almost exclusively on self-reports from female street-based prostitutes, which, though valuable, may not be representative of violence across different contexts. Research has also lumped all clients together, rather than attempting to theoretically discriminate between clients who rape, assault, or murder prostitutes, and those who do not (Lowman & Atchison, 2006).

### **Factors Associated with Violence**

Different factors appear to mitigate the risk levels for violence against prostitutes. One study of prostitutes working in Scottish cities found that working outdoors, versus indoors, was the most significant predictor of client-perpetrated violence, as 81% of women working outdoors and 48% of women working indoors reported experiencing client violence (Church, Henderson, Barnard, & Hart, 2001). Similarly, Raphael and Shapiro (2004) found that the nature and extent

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of violence may be related to venue and the degree of physical isolation of the sex worker. Other researchers theorize this difference is due to the isolation inherent in “lonely” outdoor locations, which may offer unique opportunities for victimization (Weitzer, 2005). Yet certain indoor venues, such as strip clubs or hotel rooms, also isolate prostitutes from outside help or intervention (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). Other factors that have been linked to client-perpetrated violence include belief in rape myths, thinking of sex as a commodity, soliciting sex more than once, conservative attitudes, and substance use by either clients or prostitutes (Deering et al., 2014; Miller & Schwartz, 1995; Monto, 2004; Monto & Julka, 2009; Semple et al., 2015).

### **Defining Clients**

Similar to women and men who sell sex, men who buy sex have been largely portrayed as deviant, criminal, and pathological (Cabezas, 2000; Monto & Milrod, 2014). Evidence supports the idea that purchasing sex is neither “common [n]or conventional,” even though men who purchase sex believe they are in the majority (Monto & Milrod, 2014, p. 815). This understanding grew out of an oversimplified dichotomy—that clients are typified as either “every man” or a “peculiar man” (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Lowman & Aitchison, 2006; Monto & McRee, 2005; Monto & Milrod, 2014). One previous study comparing clients to a nationally representative sample found that clients were more likely to work full-time and be unmarried or separated. Ethnicity was distributed proportionately to the regions where clients were arrested (Monto, 2004).

It is difficult to accurately estimate how many men purchase sex, yet research shows they are a clear minority (Monto & Milrod, 2014). Early researchers of sexuality, such as Kinsey (1948), and Benjamin and Masters (1964), estimated that the proportion of American men who

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had purchased sex ran as high as 69% and 80% respectively. However, these studies have been shown to be limited in generalizability, and flawed in their use of convenience sampling (Monto & Milrod, 2014).

Prevalence estimates of the number of adult men who purchase sex are generally comparable. The most recent and scientifically rigorous research suggests the prevalence of purchasing sex ranges from 14-16% of all men. A national survey conducted in 1992 reported that 16% of men had ever visited a prostitute during their lifetime (Monto, 1999). In the General Social Survey, a nationwide sociological survey using an area probability design between 2002-2010, 13.9% of adult men reported that they had purchased sex in their lifetime, although this group included men who received pay for sex as well (Monto & Milrod, 2014).

### **Violence-Related Attitudes of Clients**

The largest-scale study to date on clients of sex workers was conducted by Monto in 1999 and found that a small proportion of clients are largely responsible for the majority of violence directed towards prostitutes. As expressed by the principal researcher, “there is no reason to believe that most customers are violent” (Monto, 2004, p. 76). No evidence was found that men arrested for soliciting prostitution subscribe to rape myths at higher rates than the general population of men (Monto & Hotaling, 2001). Rape myths are beliefs that justify or excuse sexually violent behavior, often by faulting the victim (Burgess, 2007). Monto (1999) found that no rape myth question was endorsed by more than 30% (N = 1,342) of participants.

Some researchers believe clients choose to solicit prostitutes because of their perceived sexual permissiveness as compared to non-commercial sexual partners (Holzman & Pines, 1982, McKeganey & Barnard, 1992). Sexual permissiveness may extend to perception of being an

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“easy target” (Monto, 1999). Monto’s (1999) survey of men arrested for soliciting prostitution found that 19.6% agreed with the statement “I like rough, hard sex,” and 53.2% of participants agreed that “I like to be with a woman who likes to get nasty” (Monto, 1999, p. 62). It is unknown how these attitudes compare to the general population of adult American men. A conflation of prostitution with rough or “nasty” sexual activities may be linked to the high levels of violence present in transactional sex.

Importantly, there is a well-established link between victimization as a child and adult behavior that is aggressive, criminal, and violent (Widom, 1989). One study found that among men who had been arrested for soliciting prostitution, 12.9% had been touched sexually by an adult during their childhood (Monto, 1999). Another study of Canadian sex buyers showed that 23% reported being victims of sexual abuse prior to 18 years of age (Lowman & Atchison, 2006). These rates may be higher than in the general population—one meta-analysis found the mean prevalence of childhood sexual abuse to be 7.9% for men (Pereda, Guilera, Forns, & Gómez-Benito, 2009). Furthermore, clients may suffer abuse at elevated rates throughout the lifespan. A study of arrested clients surveyed in Vancouver, Canada, found that 56% had been violently victimized by a non-commercial sex partner at least once in their lives (Lowman & Atchison, 2006). While this phenomenon does not justify some clients’ violent behavior towards prostitutes, it points to the dynamic nature of sexuality and the formation of sexual practices.

It may be the case that clients who perpetrate violence would more accurately be categorized as men who perpetuate violence against vulnerable people in multiple settings. The same person can shift between the roles of pimp, intimate partner, and client, with violence occurring in each role (Karandikar & Próspero, 2010). A survey of 77 men who had purchased

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sex found that a similar proportion of men committed violent acts against both commercial and non-commercial sex partners (Lowman & Atchison, 2006). Likewise, Raphael and Shapiro (2004) argue that men who propagate violence against prostitutes “must be viewed as batterers rather than customers” (p. 137). The attitudes and behaviors of the violent minority of clients could be better understood through a theoretical integration with other types of gender-based violence.

In general, men who purchase sex are active participants in the sex industry, thus they help shape the social context of prostitution. Their attitudes and beliefs influence prostitutes’ work environment, specifically their safety. Farley et al. (2011) found that in interviews with sex buyers, engaging in the sex industry was justified in part through a perception of prostitutes as fundamentally different from non-sex selling women. Ideas about the vulnerability of female sex workers may aid in rationalizing violent behavior. A qualitative study of male prostitutes suggested that client-perpetrated violence among that population is less prevalent than among female prostitutes. The author attributed this difference to the increased vulnerability of female sex workers who have male clients (Jamel, 2011). Self-justification of violent behavior may also occur because clients believe they have paid for access to a person’s body (Miller & Schwartz, 1995).

### **Study Overview**

This exploratory study addresses a need to understand how men who purchase sexual services think about prostitution compared to non-sex-purchasing men. It is possible that clients share common ideas about legality and morality that justify violence against prostitutes, such as the commodification of sex. An alternative theory is that clients have more humanistic ideas

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about prostitutes based on their past firsthand experience. There is little research suggesting that men who purchase sex have psychological problems or antisocial behaviors (Monto & Milrod, 2014).

Extant research concerning client-perpetrated violence in prostitution has mostly consisted of qualitative interviews with current or former sex workers, and surveys measuring the attitudes and behaviors of clients. Only two studies have previously attempted to compare clients with the general population of adult men (see Farley et al., 2011; Monto & Milrod, 2014). There is also a lack of recent research on the attitudes of clients, as the survey data referenced in the literature is from the late 1990s (see Monto, 2004). Much has changed since that time, including globalization, growth of the internet-based sex industry, and the recent legalization of prostitution in several countries.

As previously discussed, the vulnerability of prostitutes as likely targets of violence is influenced by negative interaction with law enforcement, the isolated and illegal nature of prostitution, and attitudes endorsing sexual violence. Therefore, it is important to better understand these phenomena, particularly from the perspective of clients or potential clients, as this group seems to perpetrate most violence against prostitutes (Raphael & Shapiro, 2004). Comparing clients to a similar, non-client population helps develop the “peculiar man” versus “every man” theoretical split, and helps researchers and policymakers understand the cultural and social context that prostitution functions within.

### **Hypothesis**

Based upon previous research showing that men who purchase sex are neither identical to the general population, nor a homogenous group, it is hypothesized that participants who have

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previously purchased sex will share attitudes that significantly differ from those who have not previously purchased sex. Since this is an exploratory study, the direction of these differences is not predicted by the literature. It is possible that clients will share more accepting ideas towards legalization/normalization of prostitution, and more accepting attitudes towards sexual violence. Conversely, clients may possess more idealized or shaming attitudes towards prostitutes and prostitution.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Data were collected during February and March of 2018, using a recruitment posting, consent form, and survey which were all administered online. Participants were recruited using Amazon mTurk. Amazon mTurk Workers were eligible for participation if they were male, between the ages of 18-65, heterosexual, and located in the United States.

A total of 176 participants provided informed consent and completed survey procedures. Six responses were excluded due to answer discrepancies for a final total of 170. If participants did not give valid answers for open-ended questions (e.g., answers like “anything” or “0”) their responses were excluded. Participants were paid \$2.00 upon completing the survey through Amazon mTurk. The study was granted exempt status through the City University of New York Institutional Review Board, as risk was minimal and no identifiers were collected.

The sample was mostly White (78.2%,  $n = 133$ ) with some participants identifying as Asian (9.4%,  $n = 16$ ), Hispanic (7.1%,  $n = 12$ ), or Black (5.3%,  $n = 9$ ). The average age was 35 years ( $SD = 9.5$  years). There was a significant difference in ethnicity between the two groups,  $X^2(3, N = 170) = 11.98, p = .007$ . Hispanic participants were more likely to be clients than other

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ethnic groups. There were no other significant differences in demographics between the two groups (see Appendix B). Most participants were working full-time (82.9%,  $n = 141$ ), and about half of our sample had a bachelor's degree (48.2%,  $n = 82$ ).

Five participants (2.9%) responded that their sexual partners in the past year were male. The majority of our sample (85.9%,  $n = 146$ ) identified their sexual partners in the past year as female, with one-tenth (11.2%,  $n = 19$ ) answering "Not applicable" and no participants answering "Both". About two-thirds of the sample reported being in a relationship (62.4%,  $n = 104$ ) and less than one-third answered that they were not in a relationship but would like to be (27.1%,  $n = 46$ ). Eleven participants (6.5%) said they were touched sexually by an adult before puberty. Of the 170 participants, 35 (20.6%) reported having previously paid for in-person sexual services, 15 (8.8%) within the past year. On average, participants were 23 years old when they first purchased sexual services ( $n = 35$ ). Most sex buyers had their experience(s) purchasing sex in the United States (80.0%,  $n = 28$ ), as opposed to outside of the United States (20.0%,  $n = 7$ ).

### **Measures**

Outcome variables of interest were support for criminalization/legalization of prostitution, endorsement of rape myths, and endorsement of prostitution myths. Survey items included items from the following previously validated scales, and questions developed specifically for this study. The full survey is included in Appendix C. Survey responses were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree," for most questions. Some items (e.g. "Any female can be raped") were reverse-scored. The remaining items were open-ended short-response questions. Internal reliability was high for all 22 items ( $\alpha = .82$ ).

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**Rape myth acceptance.** Two items from the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980) were used to measure rape myth acceptance (“Any female can be raped”) and acceptance of interpersonal violence (“A man is never justified in hitting his wife”). Five items measuring rape myth acceptance, and three items measuring attitudes towards sexual violence were taken from Monto (1999). Monto (1999) was used as a model, as the researcher used the same questions from Burt (1980).

**Attitudes towards prostitutes.** Four items were used to measure attitudes towards prostitutes. Three questions were adapted from Monto (1999; “A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex,” “When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble,” “A woman who is stuck-up and thinks she is too good to talk to guys on the street deserves to be taught a lesson”). One question was written by the researchers (“You can tell if someone is a prostitute or not”).

**Criminality of prostitution.** Five items were used to measure perceptions of the interaction between law enforcement and prostitution (“If prostitution were legalized, prostitutes would be safer,” “Prostitution should be legalized,” “Law enforcement should crack down on prostitution,” “Law enforcement keeps prostitutes safe,” “After experiencing rape, prostitutes contact the police”). These questions were written by the researcher.

**Gender roles.** To disguise the purpose of the study, three questions addressed attitudes towards traditional gender roles. Two of these questions were taken from the Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmrich & Stapp, 1973), and one question was taken from a scale developed to measure gender roles attitudes, beliefs, and principles (Prasad & Baron, 1996).

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The survey question, “How often have you had sex of any kind (e.g., hand job, blow job, intercourse) with a professional sex worker (e.g., call girl, paid escort, massage parlor worker, prostitute)?” was used to distinguish clients from non-clients. Clients were then asked follow-up questions about their experiences purchasing sex to provide more information on frequency, nature, and geographic location. Participants who self-identified as having purchased sex were asked additional questions (“How often have you paid for sex with the past year,” “Where was your experience purchasing sex,” “What motivates you to purchase sex,” and “At what age was your first experience with a prostitute”).

**Sociodemographics.** Demographic characteristics were assessed, including age, ethnicity, years of education, employment status, and marital status. Current relationship status and desired relationship status were included as well. Finally, sexual history of participants was measured via one question about the gender of sexual partners within the past year, and one question about childhood sexual activity with adults.

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive analyses were conducted on participant sociodemographic characteristics, and a chi-squared test was used to compare the distribution of the two groups for ethnicity, education, and marital status. A correlation matrix was used to examine which items shared a positive correlation above 0.4, suggesting a moderate correlation. Based on the correlation matrix, items were divided into two factors: attitudes towards sexual violence and attitudes towards prostitution. A factor analysis confirmed that these items loaded together to form three primary factors which explained 43.4% of the variance (see Appendix A). Factors one and two were combined based on the theoretical similarity between rape myths and sexual violence. Four

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items were excluded from the analysis because they failed to meet a minimum criteria of having a primary factor loading of 0.4 or above (“Law enforcement keeps prostitutes safe,” “You can tell if someone is a prostitute or not,” “Prostitutes enjoy their work,” “After experiencing rape, prostitutes contact the police”).

Two independent sample t-tests were conducted to compare clients and non-clients using the total score for each of these two factors. Scores were totaled for each of the two factors with some items being reverse-coded. Both factors were shown to be reliable, with 14 items measuring attitudes towards sexual violence ( $\alpha = .83$ ), and four items measuring attitudes towards prostitution ( $\alpha = .76$ ). Levene’s test for equality of variances indicated that variances were not unequal for attitudes towards sexual violence ( $F = .44, p = .51$ ), or for attitudes towards prostitution ( $F = 1.29, p = .26$ ).

The survey contains three open-ended questions (e.g., “What motivates you to purchase sex?”). The responses to these questions, and any additional text provided by participants, were coded and analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is a form of qualitative analysis useful for developing theory. It involves comparison among written texts, theoretical sampling and questioning, and developing interrelated concepts based on codes. It is a commonly used methodology for qualitative data, and is appropriate for exploratory research such as this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

### **Findings**

Dismissal of prostitution and rape myths was moderately high across the sample. For example, 81.8% of our sample agreed with the statement “Prostitutes can be raped” ( $n = 139$ ). Interestingly, this is a slight decrease from agreement with the statement “Any female can be

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raped” (84.7%,  $n = 144$ ). Also, more people strongly disagreed when “Prostitutes” was used ( $n = 23$ ) instead of “Any female” ( $n = 17$ ). There was no significant difference between clients and non-clients for either of these items.

**Outcome 1:** One-fifth of our sample (20.6%,  $n = 35$ ) had previously purchased sexual services of some kind from a professional sex worker.

**Outcome 2:** There was a significant difference between clients and non-clients in mean score of endorsing attitudes towards sexual violence. Participants who had previously purchased sexual services ( $M = 26.00$ ,  $SD = 6.51$ ) scored slightly higher than participants who had not previously purchased sexual services on rape myths and other questions addressing sexual violence ( $M = 22.16$ ,  $SD = 5.70$ ), ( $t(168) = -3.47$ ,  $p = .001$ ). There was no significant difference found between the two groups on attitudes towards prostitution ( $t(168) = 1.27$ ,  $p = .21$ ). In fact, participants who had purchased sexual services ( $M = 9.17$ ,  $SD = 2.38$ ) endorsed negative attitudes towards prostitution less than participants who had not purchased sex ( $M = 9.79$ ,  $SD = 2.67$ ).

**Outcome 3:** Motivations for purchasing sexual services were varied, yet common themes emerged ( $n = 35$ ). Qualitative responses fit into five different themes: loneliness ( $n = 2$ , 5.7%), convenience and ease ( $n = 10$ , 28.6%), desire to have sex ( $n = 12$ , 34.3%), curiosity ( $n = 3$ , 8.6%), and situational factors (e.g., “my best friend was doing it,” intoxication, or travel;  $n = 8$ , 22.9%). Participants were also asked if they knew anyone who had previously purchased sex, and if so, if it changed their opinion of that person. Three-fourths of our sample said they did not know anyone (74.7%,  $n = 127$ ), and one-fourth said they did know someone who had paid for sex (25.3%,  $n = 43$ ). Most participants (88.2%,  $n = 150$ ) said it did not change their opinion or was not applicable, and about one-tenth said it did change their opinion (10.0%,  $n = 17$ ).

### Discussion

This exploratory study compared the differences between men who purchase sex and those who have not purchased sex. Overall, we found significant differences between clients and non-clients in measures of attitudes towards sexual violence, and no significant difference in attitudes towards prostitution. Specifically, we found that participants who had previously purchased sexual services endorsed rape myths, attitudes supporting sexual violence, and traditional gender roles at a significantly higher rate than the rest of the sample. This contradicts previous research that found no significant differences in attitudes towards sexual violence between clients and non-clients (Monto & Hotaling, 2001).

In our sample, we found that one-fifth of the participants reported paying for sexual services. This is slightly higher than previous studies which estimated that 14%-16% of the general population have purchased sexual services. It is possible that the unique recruitment style of Amazon mTurk leads to results that are less generalizable. People who work online may participate in other less conventional activities such as purchasing sexual services. Alternatively, previous research may have underestimated the rate of purchasing sex, since the illegality of this activity complicates accurate estimates of prevalence. Monto (2010; 2014) posits that paying for sexual services may be driven by historical and situational factors rather than characteristics particular to men who purchase sex. Our findings support this, as many motivations cited for soliciting sexual services were situational (“bachelor party,” “The woman was gorgeous,” “It was just a one time thing, I was drunk”).

Regardless of client status, our sample displayed relatively high levels of acceptance towards the legalization and normalization of prostitution. Legalization of prostitution is a

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complicated and provocative issue, and its relationship to the safety of prostitutes is controversial. Opponents see legalization as endorsing violence and trauma, while proponents see legalization as a necessary step towards regulation and oversight (Valor-Segura, Expósito, & Moya, 2011). Previous research has identified a positive correlation between age, education, and support for legalization of prostitution (Sawyer, Metz, Hinds, & Brucker, 2001). Since half of our sample was college-educated, it may be the case that the correlation between education and support for legalized prostitution holds for our sample. As with any group, it is also likely that some participants have been exposed to different cultures, including those where prostitution is legal or decriminalized.

Most rape myths and prostitution myths were dismissed by the majority of our sample. Yet there were a range of responses for every item among both groups. Rape myth acceptance was slightly higher when prostitutes were the subject, as compared to women in general. There are at least two possible interpretations here. First, these differences imply that female prostitutes may be seen as their own category, which is inherently different from other women. Secondly, it is possible that there is a conflation between selling sexual services and the ability to be raped. In a qualitative study with female sex workers, some participants said their customers assumed that participation in selling sex meant that they had given up the right to refuse consent. The presence of monetary compensation allowed clients to justify violent or abusive acts (Miller & Schwartz, 1995). This is supported by associations found between viewing sex as a commodity, attraction to violence, and dehumanization of women (Monto & Julka, 2009). It is possible that the commercial exchange present in sex work contributes to the objectification and dehumanization of prostitutes.

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Findings concerning the interaction of prostitution and law enforcement provide some insight into the vulnerability of prostitutes. Previous research has connected the perception of prostitutes as an “easy target” to the attributed sexual permissiveness of prostitutes (Holzman & Pines, 1982; McKeganey & Barnard, 1992; Monto, 1999). However, our findings suggest that prostitutes are such likely targets of violence because there is a perception of few repercussions after such acts of violence. Most of our sample did not believe that prostitutes would contact the authorities following a rape. This may mean that men who perpetrate violence against prostitutes choose their targets because they believe there is a low risk of apprehension.

Despite relatively accepting attitudes towards prostitution, the vast majority of our sample said they would not enter a relationship with a prostitute. It is possible that this difference represents two different sets of evaluative criteria: one for other people in general, and one for potential romantic partners. Qualitative responses provide some insight into the rejection of prostitutes as intimate partners. For example, one participant wrote about an acquaintance who purchased sexual services: “I thought they were tempting fate with diseases.” This reveals an association between prostitutes and sexually transmitted infections.

Qualitative responses also demonstrated participants’ perception that sex typically occurs within intimate relationships. Paying for sex was seen as an alternative to abstaining from sex if an intimate relationship was not present. Some participants who had purchased sexual services cited the relative ease of purchasing sex as a motivating factor, when compared to pursuing or maintaining a relationship. This emphasis on immediate and easy sex strengthens the argument that some sex buyers feel entitled to sex (see Monto, 1999). Entitlement could motivate not only sexual acts within the paid sexual encounter, but violent acts as well.

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### **Limitations**

This study is not without limitations. Though Amazon mTurk guarantees anonymity to participants, it prevents researchers from ensuring that participants are engaged and capable of committing the task at hand (Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013). While these may be somewhat overcome with attention checks, it is still possible for respondents to falsify answers. In addition, the proportion of men who said they had sex of some kind with a professional sex worker was higher than predicted by previous research. It is difficult to estimate whether this sample is representative of the general population of American adult males. However, some research has suggested that Amazon mTurk users are more diverse than traditionally over-studied college students, with a better gender split and more non-white participants (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

### **Future Research**

Most men seem to experience common motivations to seek prostitutes (e.g., loneliness, attraction to specific traits or sexual experiences, difficulty establishing relationships), yet never act on them by purchasing sex (Monto, 2004). More research is needed on the life factors and sociocultural contexts surrounding clients—specifically those who engage in verbal, physical, or sexual violence. Future research on ethnic or cultural contexts may provide insight into the context of buying sex in general. Our finding of different ethnic composition in the sex-purchasing group should be replicated with a larger sample size. Since there is no dominant theory to explain why some people purchase sex and some do not, or why some subset of this group perpetrates violence, more exploratory research is needed to find any commonalities among men who both purchase sex and engage in violence against prostitutes. Our findings

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suggest that there may be some connection between purchasing sexual services and endorsing sexual violence. Previous research has found that men who engaged in sexual violence were much higher in rape myth acceptance (Monto & Hotaling, 2001). However, since our study focused on attitudes without asking participants to report actual incidents of violence, future research should add credibility to the assumption that attitudes and behavior are related in this context.

Further research should examine the relationship between intimate partner violence and violence in prostitution, and the ways in which sociocultural contexts inform both. Given that previous research has established overlap between the roles of pimp, client, and romantic partner, relational dynamics that foster violence in these contexts should be further examined. Future research should also investigate distinctions between prostitution qua prostitution, power dynamics and gender socialization, and violence.

The lack of a cohesive, compelling theoretical explanation of violence in prostitution makes it more difficult to understand the needs of victims. Since previous research has found client-targeted interventions to be lacking (Lovell & Jordan, 2012), these programs could be improved or replaced by programming geared towards deflating rape and prostitution myths. For example, Monto (1999) posits that the excitement that motivates some people to visit prostitutes stems from fantasies that could be debunked through education. Similarly, Mansson (2006) explains motivation through fantasies and images of prostitutes that are influenced by the power imbalance between men and women. Modifying client-targeted intervention programs could help sex trade customers make better-informed decisions about purchasing sex, rather than using scare tactics to persuade customers to avoid the sex trade.

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Our sample displayed high levels of support for legalization of prostitution. Since it is unlikely that participants lived in jurisdictions where prostitution is already legalized (as these only exist in Nevada), future research should investigate motivations for changing current legislation on prostitution. It is possible that for a few of our participants, these beliefs were based on past experiences with the sex industry. For non-clients, however, high support of legalization should be investigated by further research. It may be the case that participants have beliefs or knowledge about other countries where prostitution is legalized. An additional motivation to support legalization is reflected in our finding that most participants believed prostitutes would be safer if prostitution were legalized.

One of the primary goals of prostitution research should be violence reduction for female sex workers. In 1980, philosopher Lars Ericsson wrote: “In order to improve prostitution, we must improve our attitudes toward it” (p. 366). This study demonstrates that, given an orientation towards destigmatization and violence prevention, there is still room for improvement.

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## Appendix A

<b>Component Matrix<sup>a</sup></b>					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex.	.46			-.41	
Any female can be raped.			.71		
Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.	.71				
A man is never justified in hitting his wife.	.46				
When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are trying to entice men.	.56			-.42	
Husbands and wives should have equal roles in decisions about spending money.	.61				
In most rapes the victim is promiscuous.	.68				
Women who are raped after getting drunk at a party get what they deserve.	.65				
A woman who is stuck-up and thinks she is too good to talk to guys on the street deserves to be taught a lesson.	.69				
I like to smack a woman around a little during sex.	.59				
Prostitutes can be raped.			.72		
Being angry makes me more likely to want sex.	.64				
Intoxication among women is worse than intoxication among men.	.56				
Prostitutes enjoy their work.					
I would enter a relationship with a prostitute.		.60			
Sex is more fun if the woman fights a little.	.55				
You can tell if someone is a prostitute or not.				-.44	
After experiencing rape, prostitutes contact the police.					.63
If prostitution was legalized, prostitutes would be safer.		.65			
Law enforcement should crack down on prostitution.		.69			
Law enforcement keeps prostitutes safe.				.62	
Prostitution should be legalized.		.83			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.<sup>a</sup>

a. 5 components extracted.

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**Appendix B**

Table 1

*Crosstabulation of Ethnicity and Client Status*

	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Non-Client</b>	13	6	5	110	134
<b>Client</b>	3	3	7*	22	35
<b>Total</b>	16	9	12	133	170

Table 2

*Crosstabulation of Education and Client Status*

	<b>Asian</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Non-Client</b>	66	12	23	34	135
<b>Client</b>	16	6	3	10	35
<b>Total</b>	82	18	26	44	170

Table 3

*Crosstabulation of Employment Status and Client Status*

	<b>In School</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>Working Full-Time</b>	<b>Working Part-Time</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Non-Client</b>	4	14	110	7	135
<b>Client</b>	0	2	31	2	35
<b>Total</b>	4	16	141	9	170

Note. \* =  $p \leq .05$

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## Appendix C

		Non-Client	Client	Total
A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex.	Strongly disagree	19.4%	1.2%	20.6%
	Disagree	39.4%	10.0%	49.4%
	Agree	19.4%	7.1%	26.5%
	Strongly agree	1.2%	2.4%	3.5%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Any female can be raped.	Strongly agree	41.8%	8.8%	50.6%
	Agree	26.5%	7.6%	34.1%
	Disagree	4.1%	1.2%	5.3%
	Strongly disagree	7.1%	2.9%	10.0%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers.	Strongly disagree	48.2%	7.1%	55.3%
	Disagree	24.7%	10.0%	34.7%
	Agree	4.1%	1.8%	5.9%
	Strongly agree	2.4%	1.8%	4.1%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
A man is never justified in hitting his wife.	Strongly agree	48.2%	11.2%	59.4%
	Agree	21.2%	3.5%	24.7%
	Disagree	7.1%	4.7%	11.8%
	Strongly disagree	2.9%	1.2%	4.1%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
When women go around braless or wearing short	Strongly disagree	20.0%	2.9%	22.9%
	Disagree	35.3%	8.8%	44.1%
	Agree	18.8%	6.5%	25.3%

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skirts and tight tops, they are trying to entice men.	Strongly agree	5.3%	2.4%	7.6%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Husbands and wives should have equal roles in decisions about spending money.	Strongly agree	41.8%	8.8%	50.6%
	Agree	32.4%	10.0%	42.4%
	Disagree	4.1%	0.6%	4.7%
	Strongly disagree	1.2%	1.2%	2.4%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
In most rapes the victim is promiscuous.	Strongly disagree	49.4%	8.2%	57.6%
	Disagree	23.5%	11.2%	34.7%
	Agree	5.9%	1.2%	7.1%
	Strongly agree	0.6%		0.6%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Women who are raped after getting drunk at a party get what they deserve.	Strongly disagree	57.6%	11.2%	68.8%
	Disagree	19.4%	7.1%	26.5%
	Agree	1.8%	1.8%	3.5%
	Strongly agree	0.6%	0.6%	1.2%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
A woman who is stuck-up and thinks she is too good to talk to guys on the street deserves to be taught a lesson.	Strongly disagree	67.1%	12.9%	80.0%
	Disagree	10.6%	5.9%	16.5%
	Agree	1.2%	1.2%	2.4%
	Strongly agree	0.6%	0.6%	1.2%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

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		Non-Client	Client	Total
I like to smack a woman around a little during sex.	Strongly disagree	51.8%	12.9%	64.7%
	Disagree	19.4%	4.7%	24.1%
	Agree	6.5%	2.4%	8.8%
	Strongly agree	1.8%	0.6%	2.4%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Prostitutes can be raped.	Strongly agree	47.1%	7.6%	54.7%
	Agree	20.6%	6.5%	27.1%
	Disagree	2.9%	1.8%	4.7%
	Strongly disagree	8.8%	4.7%	13.5%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Being angry makes me more likely to want sex.	Strongly disagree	50.6%	10.6%	61.2%
	Disagree	24.1%	7.6%	31.8%
	Agree	2.4%	1.8%	4.1%
	Strongly agree	2.4%	0.6%	2.9%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Intoxication among women is worse than intoxication among men.	Strongly disagree	37.6%	4.7%	42.4%
	Disagree	31.8%	10.6%	42.4%
	Agree	5.9%	5.3%	11.2%
	Strongly agree	4.1%		4.1%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Prostitutes enjoy their work.	Strongly disagree	16.5%	2.4%	18.8%
	Disagree	46.5%	12.4%	58.8%
	Agree	15.9%	5.9%	21.8%
	Strongly agree	0.6%		0.6%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

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		Non-Client	Client	Total
I would enter a relationship with a prostitute.	Strongly agree	1.8%		1.8%
	Agree	7.1%	2.9%	10.0%
	Disagree	24.1%	8.2%	32.4%
	Strongly disagree	46.5%	9.4%	55.9%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Sex is more fun if the woman fights a little.	Strongly disagree	48.8%	12.4%	61.2%
	Disagree	24.7%	4.7%	29.4%
	Agree	4.1%	3.5%	7.6%
	Strongly agree	1.8%		1.8%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
You can tell if someone is a prostitute or not.	Strongly disagree	27.6%	7.1%	34.7%
	Disagree	40.0%	7.6%	47.6%
	Agree	10.6%	5.3%	15.9%
	Strongly agree	1.2%	0.6%	1.8%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
After experiencing rape, prostitutes contact the police.	Strongly disagree	21.2%	5.9%	27.1%
	Disagree	47.1%	10.0%	57.1%
	Agree	8.8%	4.1%	12.9%
	Strongly agree	2.4%	0.6%	2.9%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
If prostitution was legalized, prostitutes would be safer.	Strongly agree	26.5%	7.6%	34.1%
	Agree	34.7%	9.4%	44.1%
	Disagree	14.1%	2.9%	17.1%
	Strongly disagree	4.1%	0.6%	4.7%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

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		Non-Client	Client	Total
Law enforcement should crack down on prostitution.	Strongly disagree	17.6%	6.5%	24.1%
	Disagree	34.7%	8.2%	42.9%
	Agree	21.2%	4.1%	25.3%
	Strongly agree	5.9%	1.8%	7.6%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Law enforcement keeps prostitutes safe.	Strongly disagree	19.4%	5.9%	25.3%
	Disagree	45.3%	8.2%	53.5%
	Agree	12.9%	4.7%	17.6%
	Strongly agree	1.8%	1.8%	3.5%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%

		Non-Client	Client	Total
Prostitution should be legalized.	Strongly agree	20.6%	5.9%	26.5%
	Agree	32.4%	12.4%	44.7%
	Disagree	15.3%	1.2%	16.5%
	Strongly disagree	11.2%	1.2%	12.4%
Total		79.4%	20.6%	100.0%