Sex and the Internet:

Understanding Female Sexual Empowerment as it relates to Sex Work

A Social Action Project by Evelyn Besom

December 2, 2020
The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women’s Leadership’s website at http://iwl.rutgers.edu.
Background
75% Increase in “model sign-ups” on OnlyFans in April

15% Spike in traffic in under 24 hours after Beyonce “Savage” remix

29.4 Million Number of people laid off as a result of covid as of mid-March

Data from Insider article
Research Questions

Question 1
What is the relationship between sexual empowerment and sex work?
- Is sex work an act of empowerment?
- Is sex work inherently oppressive in a patriarchal society?

Question 2
Are sites like OnlyFans gentrifying sex work?
- Are societal perceptions of sex work/female sexuality changing as a result?

Question 3
Who benefits?
- How does race, class, and sexuality affect how society perceives/accepts female sexuality?
Conceptual Frameworks:

- Third Wave Feminism/Postfeminism
- Gentrification
- Neoliberalism
- Sex Work

Fig. 1 Research Graphic (Minutes)
Project Implementation
Final SAP Proposal (intersection of sex work and sex trafficking)

Spring 2020

Research & Shift in framework away from sex trafficking

Summer

More research, first draft

Sept./Oct.

Writing drafts and editing

Conceptualizing zine

Nov./Dec.

Design Libere Zine

Brand development/growth

Outreach

Future
Project Description

- Research based (unofficial SAP/thesis combo)
- Research Paper
  - Case study: social media (OnlyFans)
  - Conclusion: it’s complicated!
- Audience?
- Libere Zine conceptualization

Fig. 2 OnlyFans Logo (Pocket-Link)

Fig. 3 Dannii Harwood (NYT)
“We do more than resist. We create alternative texts that are not solely reactions.” Bell Hooks (128)

“The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women...For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with its opposite, the pornographic.” Audre Lorde (88)
Insights

- Time management
- Perseverance
- Importance of being able to articulate and defend my ideas
- Advocating for marginalized groups

Skills Developed:

Research    Academic Writing    Analytic Thinking    Graphic Design
Creativity    Tech Proficiency   Communication
Future Plans

Personal Goals:

- Design Libere zine
- Brand Development
- Marketing and outreach
- Open for submissions

Future Scholars:

- Expand on/contribute to zine
- Additional research as this is a relatively new phenomenon

Fig 4. Brand Development Graphic (Feedster)
Lewd - crude and offensive in a sexual way

Acronym For:
- Learning
- Listening To
- Eyeing
- Wearing
- Doing
Bibliography


