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VIVA VOCE PRESENTATION

*The History Of the Sexualisation of  
Women  
And Is It Still Happening Today?*

Independent Project  
ADPA6000

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# Research Aim & Question

## Research Question

**I chose the research question The history of the sexualisation of women within the creative industries and is it still happening today? as it allows for exploration for the representation which is perceived as sexualisation, objectification and empowering, whilst being able to further my research with historical context which allows to highlight how the past has influenced the creative industries today.**

## Research Aim

**The aim of this research is to examine how female identifying creatives are represented within the creative industries, focusing specifically on 3 sectors, Dance, film and Music.**

# Motivation

**As a young woman that has grown up within the dance world, I believe it is very important and crucial to understand the topic as a dancer and a dance school owner, whilst growing up I have received many difficulties within being exposed to sexualised imagery within dance as well as the beauty standard pressures. I have found myself feeling uncomfortable during productions due to clothing and choreography choices being made without consent meaning that it has exposed me to multiple sexualised comments. Gaining more information within this topic has allowed me to apply it to my own classes as I am more aware that some may be uncomfortable with certain movements and choreographical choices meaning that I now create different options for everyone to feel comfortable within my class setting.**

# Context

**Historically, women have been centred as objects for visual pleasure within film, dance pieces, song lyrics and music videos, this reinforces the unrealistic beauty standards within society.**

**However, in the media we are increasingly seeing female creatives expressing their sexuality openly, which is often framed as empowerment. This has created the important discussion of what is considered empowering compared to objectifying and has become a large focus of my research.**

## **Key Theories**

- **Pierre Bourdieu - Habitus (1972)**
- **Laura Mulvey - The Male Gaze (1975)**
- **Barbara Fredrickson and Tommi Ann Roberts - The Objectification Theory (1997)**

### **The Male Gaze Theory (1975)**

**This theory argues that women are constantly positioned within the media for male visual pleasure. Although this was developed in 1975, I found it still useful and considerably relevant in the understanding of the perceptions of participants today.**

# Theoretical Framework

### **The Habitus Theory (1972)**

**I used the Habitus Theory by Pierre Bourdieu (1972), as this explains how the internalisation of industry norms have reproduced over the years.**

### **The Objectification Theory (1997)**

**I included the Objectification Theory by Barbara Fredrickson and Tommi-Ann Roberts, which explores how being portrayed as an object has had a psychological impact on creatives.**

**With the use of all of these frameworks, it allowed me to examine structural norms, visual representation and the psychological effects.**

# Methodology

## Research Design

To collect my primary research, it adopted a mixed method approach through a online survey, I collected a total of 26 participants who are connected to the creative industries.

The google form survey consisted of both quantitative and qualitative questions to allow for the opportunity to identify patterns and explore personal experiences.

## Rationale

I chose to keep all participants anonymous since there was a potential chance of more in depth and honest answers especially in terms of the sensitive questions about sexualisation.

After I collected the data, I categorised all responses into separate themes which link to my theoretical frameworks, which allowed for further understanding of patterns which potentially are reproducing.

# Data Collection Process

**Ethical approval was obtained from the university before publishing my Google form survey.**

**The survey was completely anonymous and did not ask any questions which may identify the participant.**

**All participants gave consent before and after the completion of the survey to allow them to decide whether the responses which have been given they want to share.**

**Participants were recruited through social media platforms, this allowed for a further reach of ranges of creatives however it did limit the demographic control.**

# Finding and Results

## **All Findings Did Not Reveal A Conclusive Conclusion**

- 100% of Participants Agreed That There is Pressure on a Women's Appearance
- The Identification Empowerment and Objectification Having a Distinctive Difference
- 88.46% of Participants Believe Women Are Still Being Sexualised
- Creative Control and Consent Were Highlighted as Empowerment

**My findings showed that sexualisation is still largely perceived within the creative industries, with many participants identifying continued pressure regarding appearance and clothing. However, the finding that empowerment and objectification were not perceived as simple as opposites had a significant impact within my research.**

**There was large evidence that empowerment is connected to consent and creative control from the creative themselves. When individuals had control over creative decisions it can be seen as empowering, when the decisions are shaped by industry pressure, that it when it is viewed as objectifying.**

# Analysis

**When linking my findings to theory, the Male Gaze (Mulvey, 1975) was evident in how participants described and perceived representation.**

**Habitus (Bourdieu, 1972) helped explain how these expectations continue, as the normalisation of industry norms have occurred.**

**Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) was particularly relevant in understanding how constant exposure to sexualised imagery can influence self-perception.**

**Overall, the data suggested that sexualisation has evolved in presentation, but not disappeared.**

## **Themes Which Appear**

- **Continued Presence of The Male Gaze (1975)**
- **Empowerment Framed Through Choice**
- **Lack of Creative Control**
- **The Internalising of Unrealistic Standards**

# Limitations

**There were several limitations within this study.**

**The sample size was relatively small, and the majority of participants identified as female, which limited gender comparison.**

**Time constraints also restricted the ability to conduct interviews, which may have provided deeper insight.**

**However, despite these limitations, consistent themes emerged across responses, suggesting the issue remains significant.**

# **Academic Development**

**Throughout this process I have developed my academic skill largely  
Such as:**

**This project significantly developed my academic skills. I learned how to design and conduct primary research ethically, critically evaluate literature, and apply theory to real data.**

**Due to myself having personal experiences related to this topic, I had to ensure my analysis remained objective and evidence based rather than including my own opinion.**

**One of the biggest lessons was recognising that even though I thought there would be a straight forward answer for this research question, you can never predict what will come from a societal issue.**

# Conclusion

**To Conclude  
my research suggests that the sexualisation of women  
remains embedded within the creative industries,  
although it is often reframed as empowerment.**

**The boundary between empowerment and objectification  
is heavily influenced by control and consent, yet broader  
structural expectations continue to shape representation.**

**Overall, this project strengthened both my academic  
understanding and my awareness of the industry I am  
entering professionally.**

# Reference List



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