THE SCARLET UNDERWORLD: THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH PRESS, PROSTITUTION, AND THE CREATION OF SOCIAL EVIL (1880-1917)

by

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(Under the Direction of Janice Hume)

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the evolution of the press's portrayal of prostitution in the cities of New Orleans, New York, and London, England, between 1880 and 1917. It is concerned with the manner in which meanings are constructed, and cultural practices are organized and regulated through the public arena of the press in their articulation of a common sense of community, including the creation of social and moral boundaries. This study draws from the analytical framework of Foucauldian theory, looking upon the end of the Victorian era as a key historic moment in which the regulation of prostitution assumed the status of a major social problem.

INDEX WORDS: Prostitution, Social Evil, Progressive Era Reform

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, THEORY, LITERATURE REVIEW

> Oh, the grinding drudgery of the lives of the ill-paid---
> longing for time to read, to get out into the country, to
> rest longer and better between the days of toil, to have
> something of the real sweetness and brightness of living,
> to really live, and not exist only, to have somewhat of the
> beauty of life and not all its seamy side; oh, for a surcease
> of waiting, waiting, and doing without at last!
> --a letter to the editor of *The New York Times*, by "Patricia,"
> November 27, 1900.

Prostitution is both a cultural symbol and a social institution.[1] Historically, it has been an economic outlet that has allowed women to survive in an atmosphere where lack of education, few opportunities, and class and gender prejudices left little room for upward mobility. Prostitution thrived in urban areas such as New Orleans, New York, and London, England during the nineteenth century, and was a topic of concern in their respective local daily newspapers.[2] In this portion of a letter to the editor of *The New York Times*, a woman who left only her first name "Patricia" as identification, poetically expresses the hardships of women of the lower classes. Her letter reflects the struggle of these women to attain not only upward mobility, but to even survive the "grinding drudgery" of life from day to day. It is no wonder that millions of women like her, across America and Western Europe, turned to prostitution as an economic alternative.

Beyond issues of social disorder or sexual exploitation, prostitution was a lifestyle that was also fraught with difficulties, including the influences of increasing rationalization and

commercialization of society, which made the institution a target of increasing scrutiny in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.[3] During this era, the social tensions which came to bear upon the practice of prostitution forever changed the way in which the sex trade was depicted, viewed, and ultimately, contained and controlled.

This study is concerned with the manner in which meanings are constructed, and cultural practices are organized and regulated through the public arena of the press in their articulation of a common community. In particular, it is concerned with the creation of a sense of common morality. The focus of this study is the evolution of the press' portrayal of prostitution in the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana, New York, N.Y., and London, England, at the turn of the twentieth century---specifically the years 1880 through 1917. This era is significant because the end of the Victorian era heralded a time in history when women's engagement in prostitution had reached its peak, and simultaneously assumed the status of a major social problem.[4] What previously had been deemed a "necessary evil" had become reevaluated as a "social evil."[5]

By the mid-nineteenth century, a wide variety of commercial sexual activity flourished in the largest American and European cities.[6] From the most lavish high-end brothels to the lowliest back-alley cribs, prostitution had infiltrated society on every level, commercializing sex, and creating multimillion-dollar businesses.[7] During this era, prostitution engendered an "underground" economy upon which many women, with few other resources and economic opportunities, came to rely. Historian Timothy J. Gilfoyle has estimated that 5 to 10 percent of all young nineteenth-century women in New York (between fifteen and thirty years old) prostituted at some point.[8] The well-known "red light district" in New Orleans, Louisiana, also contained high percentages of females engaged in prostitution during this time. By 1900, there were between 1,500 and 2,000 prostitutes working in this district alone.[9] Prostitution in New Orleans was a major local industry, that at its height, is thought to have generated 10 to 15

million dollars each year.[10] Gilfoyle notes: "for the first time in American life, with the opportunity to resort to prostitutes on a massive scale, sex became an objective consumer commodity."[11]

Nineteenth century London, specifically between the 1860s and 1870s, marked a high point for streetwalking prostitutes. These women worked outside the brothel system, relatively unencumbered by the vested interests of third parties who might share in their earnings.[12] The lure of better pay and less police harassment brought many young women into London from the provinces to ply their trade. The vast public spaces in London's city center allowed for a great many women to work both the high streets of the West End shopping districts as well as the many open public parks. The numbers of these women have been estimated at between 50,000 and 80,000, as official numbers are impossible to ascertain.[13]

Certainly, within these growing urban centers prostitution had established itself as a viable means of income, upon which thousands of women had come to rely. The combined effects of industrialization, the transportation revolution, and growing militarization had created large male populations that could support large numbers of prostitutes in the larger city centers.[14] The saloons, concert halls, taverns, and vice districts that working men frequented became prime locations for prostitutes to find their customers, and easily exchange sexual favors for cash.

But, with prostitution's increasing status as a major commodity, also came increasing social fears. The notion began to emerge that prostitution had been left to grow unchecked, and had reached dangerous and unacceptable levels, both in America and in London.[15] For this reason, the commercial sex trade was pushed to the forefront of public debate and social relations in the larger metropolitan areas.[16] Press coverage of the controversial issues concerning prostitution became more and more common as this debate was formulated and represented to the public at large. Daily newspapers, like those of New Orleans, New York, and London, became one of the

outlets for the public articulation of this debate, and helped to underscore the significance of social issues concerning prostitution to their readers.[17] The wide circulation of these publications aided in increasing the public discourse on sexuality, and helped to foster political movements that had a marked effect on social relations and the political economy of sex for both men and women.[18]

Several key issues became associated with prostitution during this time. Growing fears, which stemmed from the unforeseen changes of the industrial era, ignited a kind of hysteria over urban vice.[19] Civic corruption and prostitution were continually conflated within the media coverage of vice, and helped to cement this relationship within the public's consciousness.[20] Prostitution was linked, both politically and economically, to other larger problems which had also evolved in the fastest growing metropolitan areas. This linkage became an effective method of both stereotyping the women who chose the sex trade as their means of survival, and a powerful political tool for the reformation movement.

By the turn of the century, the social purity movement in both England and America, supported by medical warnings of a potential epidemic of venereal disease, had incited an outburst of civic righteousness.[21] Progressive reformers formed civic leagues which became a type of ersatz vice commission, investigating the proliferation of urban prostitution and probing the economic workings of the commercialized vice market.[22] These groups, which drew their ranks from women's clubs, welfare leagues, suffragist chapters, social hygiene groups, juvenile protective leagues, refuge homes, immigrant protective leagues, legal aid societies, temperance groups, and commerce organizations, gradually learned to translate their moral tenacity into highly influential political power.[23] Reformist campaigns, in their efforts to alert their respective communities to the extent of the commercial sex trade, coupled prostitution with every imaginable form of individual and public corruption. These citizens' leagues sought to increase

state repression of the most visible evidence of commercialized vice and to increase state control over the lives of prostitutes.[24]

Reformers actively worked to retool the image of the prostitute from an unavoidable urban necessity to that of the "fallen woman," a debauchee who resided at the heart of all forms of Social Evil. The key issues that were of concern in this era included the evolution of women's roles in the public sphere, the preservation of class-based notions of respectability, and anxieties over modernization, foreign influences, and economic instability.[25] Prostitution, as a social and economic activity which traversed many of society's most established class, race, and gender barriers, was fertile ground for these, and many other, sociocultural debates. It is in this era (1880-1917) that prostitution was saddled with a host of connotations which forced it to take center stage in a variety of public controversies from immigration, disease, and class-related issues, to notions of the place of the modern woman in the urban landscape, including her rights and privileges.[26]

Media and the Construction of Sociocultural Meaning

The media serve as an active extension of the way society represents and understands its own sense of community in all its sociocultural complexities.[27] Newspapers, then, may be viewed as historically situated texts that served as particular social constructions within an era. This aspect of their make-up allows them to act as a small window onto the communities they served, shedding light on the ways in which public discourses were created and elaborated.[28] Through their creation, these public discourses helped to shape a very specific sense of community. As noted by Michael Schudson, newspapers function to build solidarity and to reaffirm common values within a society by acting as the most representative carrier and construer of public consciousness.[29] By extension, then, the press can also function to reinforce the values and norms

which have already achieved a wide consensual foundation, forming a public sense of morality.[30]

It has been noted that by the 1850s, American cities, "with all [their] diversity and anonymity," necessitated the formation of a new kind of newspaper, a paper which "took a broad view of local events" in an effort to sustain a cohesive sense of community.[31] The more highly populated American and European cities had become large enough that they were no longer face-to-face communities, but still required a sense of community identity that could be found in the pages of their local daily newspaper.[32]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the effects of commercialization and industrialization created dramatic changes in the social fabric of Western societies. Within this period, new "social evils" emerged as signposts of perceived moral decay. New conceptions of respectability combined with increased fluidity between the classes, creating new tensions within changing social and gendered boundaries. These social tensions, then, engendered new subjects for public debate. The regulation of prostitution was one of many such topics which was discussed and debated in local press coverage.

Victorian newspapers helped in the dissemination and production of specific attitudes which surrounded the issue of urban prostitution.[33] Because of the mass reception of daily media, repercussions from local legislation concerning the regulation of prostitution were felt throughout America and England, and helped to usher in more restrictive reformative measures.[34] News stories which dealt with the public debate over the regulation of prostitution, the curbing of "white slavery," the fear of outbreaks of contagious venereal diseases, and the economic impact of vice and corruption became commonplace subject matter. The social narratives which were constructed in the major daily newspapers helped in the formation of a particular and delimiting identification for prostitutes, acting to effectively marginalize and repress their socioeconomic power.[35]

The connotations which surrounded prostitution at this time were a direct result of this public vilification of the prostitute, and drew support from narratives presented in the media.[36] Hayden White contends that "narratives of the 'real,' such as history and news reporting, impose a formal coherence on events: they 'narrativize' data into a coherent 'well-made' tale, converting 'chaotic experience into meaningful moral drama."[37] Meanings, then, are structured textually through a set of conventions that establish a flexible contract between a reporter and his/her readers for making sense of the experience.[38] Because these narratives are historically situated, they allow us to deconstruct their creation, revealing the ideological underpinnings which gave them support, and shedding light on their powers of influence and manipulation.

Victorian attitudes about prostitution were intricately bound up with notions of race, class, gender, and social mobility.[39] Therefore, any analysis of the press coverage of prostitution in this era is also fraught with complexity of these varying issues and how they came to bear upon the narratives that were created in these publlications. These narratives were formed to cater to a specific demographic--- primarilly, these newspapers were written to engage a mostly white, male, middle-class audience, which lends them a specific slant. And, the narratives which were formulated during this era still inform our current ideas of sex-related issues, and how they pertain to the public at large and its sense of a morally-based community.[40] This type of historical examination is relevant because similar discourses on morality and sexuality are used today to promote specific sociopolitical agendas, and the media are the prime outlets through which these concepts are filtered to the public.[41]

Today, morality is still at the center point of many mass-mediated political debates. Politicians routinely cast their policies in terms of values and moral responsibility. Diane McWhorter contends that "morality" is the new "race" (as in racism), and posits that political issues that connect with the electorate tend to be related to vice and /or sex.[42] Unlike the very real

problems of racial inequity, the moral "crisis" that continually reappears is largely manufactured within the realm of politically-driven media hype.[43]

The "sanctity of the family" argument is part of the political arsenal aligned against issues concerning homosexuality, gay marriage, and abortion, just to name a few.[44] Activist groups, like The Concerned Women for America, which champion the repression of these and a host of other "un-Christian" activities, are often given air time on national news networks when the latest controversial topic is given attention. These groups have their roots in the women's leagues that were formed during the Progressive Era, but have access to much more far-reaching and powerful media outlets. Their opinions are disseminated by national and international print media and cable television channels, and effectively influence legislative measures. They also have the limitless possibilities of the Internet to reach and influence their audiences, and to help mobilize their ideals. This study intends to provide some historical context for the evolution of the discourse surrounding the commercial sex trade and its depiction in the press at the turn of the twentieth century.

Foucault's "Insistence of the Rule" and Othering

In his last three treatises on the history of sexuality, Foucault posited that the discourse of sexuality was a privileged object of analysis, and the essential place to grasp the working of power in modern Western societies.[45] This study focuses, in particular, on Foucault's articulation of the deployment of sexuality as "the insistence of the rule."[46] Within this paradigm, power prescribes an "order" for sex, and sex is to be deciphered in its relationship to the law.[47] Sex, within this theoretical perspective, is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden.[48] This study utilizes the conception of the social articulation of this construction, and offers that it may be seen in terms as an Othering modality.

Within this paradigm, definitions of sexual practices and meanings, the institutionalization of the commercial sex trade, and ideas about morality, are not social inevitabilities, but social constructs, created to serve distinct purposes.[49] It is this notion of social construction which is useful in the textual analysis of print media which represent a very specifically crafted concept of social "reality" to their readers. Journalistic accounts of these issues intensified the sense of civic responsibility embedded in these issues, and served to Other those social elements which existed outside of newly constructed moral boundaries.[50]

Within this construct, the world of immorality is situated as the Other, in opposition to all that is valued as good and morally respectable. This overworld/underworld structuring of the cities' public (and private) spaces allows for a kind of superficial ordering of society which seeks to satisfy our problematic relationship with sexual and moral norms.[51] The vilification and Othering of prostitution, then, was an essential component of this public discourse, acting as a guise to promote social stability and to ensure economic prosperity for the future. Historian Judith Walkowitz contends that "through the incitement, prohibition, and normalization of desire, these discourses facilitated the policing of society, a policing that extends into the liberated twentieth century, when the 'mechanisms of repression' deceptively seem to be loosening their grip."[52]

Near the turn of the twentieth century, the mass-distribution news media became a primary location where "ideological divisions between men and women, the 'better classes' and the 'lower classes,'...'us' and 'them'" were reproduced and reinforced.[53] The news media emerged as one of the main forums where public controversies were introduced and debated. Mass-mediated controversies, such as those issues directly and indirectly related to prostitution, exhibited the articulation of social difference within a specific community, and acted to Other undesirable elements. Moreover, they provided the context for institutional struggles over

cultural and social authority at particular historical moments.[54] Issues concerning prostitution became hot-button topics that were related to a host of social ills.

Michel Foucault's theories on sexuality have focused on the Victorian era as an instrumental period in which sex first became "a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, [and] made to function according to an optimum."[55] If something is to function for the "greater good of all" this implies a type of public negotiation of what that "greater good" entails. It is this sort of publicly negotiated sense of morality and propriety that came to characterize the debates over the regulation of prostitution.

Othering modalities concerning morality are still commonplace. They are employed when one party seeks to align itself with such an abstract concept as "family values." A key phrase such as this carries with it a whole host of moral implications and value-based judgments-----the nuances of which have been portrayed and negotiated to the public through the media. Political parties often define themselves in terms of taking the higher moral ground. Ostensibly, they seek to define themselves as a contrast to their political counterparts. The politicization of sexuality continues to be a point on which these types of discourses turn, inspiring renewed efforts of moral reformation, and continuing to spark heated debates and protests.[56] Issues concerning same-sex marriage, pornography, and other sex-related public discourses still influence political platforms, create political alliances, and affect legislative outcomes.[57] The discursive language, used in the media to define and delineate moral concerns, continues to reveal the ways in which sociopolitical hierarchies are instituted and maintained.[58]

Historians John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman's study of American prostitution reveals that the sexual culture in New Orleans and New York, between Reconstruction and 1920, exhibited trends which they have identified as national in scope.[59] These trends include the

commercialization of sex, and its emergence in mainstream discourses---often as a focal point of social reform.[60] Moral reformation movements in New Orleans, New York and several other major cities repudiated the sins of the flesh in favor of what seemed to be the diminishing attention paid to conventional notions of restraint and respectability. Moreover, the local movements to control prostitution served to keep in check a distinct class of women who were able to achieve an unprecedented upturn in both their economic and social status.[61] It is this growing concern with establishing the maintenance of specific social mores that is of concern here, especially as it is articulated in the press.

This study examines the discourse which was established by the local press in its coverage of the sex trade, and seeks to discover how this discourse reflected these cities' own sense of community.[62] Although prostitution was largely tolerated, numerous ordinances were passed during this time which attempted to regulate and control the sex trade, which some believed had become a pervasive and unruly influence on many cities.[63] Articles which detail the adoption of these ordinances, as well as those which speak of the moral character of their city and the nation at large, will lend insight into the growing public concern with notions of respectability, controlled sexuality, and moral reformation.

Existing Literature

Many histories of prostitution have analyzed its role in American and European societies, specifically targeting the years around the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[64] American histories have typically given more attention to the highly documented sex trades in the urban areas of New York and San Francisco. Ruth Rosen's work *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900--1918,* looks at the national character of prostitution. Her work has been instrumental in restructuring the discussion of this topic to include how a society's

response to prostitution is a reflection of its sociocultural values.[65] This conceptualization has informed the theoretical underpinning of this study, as it helps to establish a workable basis for the study of social values as they are represented in press coverage.

Rosen's work also acknowledges the economic basis of prostitution, and establishes their relationship vis-à-vis the middle-class reform movement who sought to eradicate prostitution form the landscape of urban America.[66] These issues have also been examined in Alecia P. Long's history, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920*.[67] Long's work examines the relationship between prostitution, reformers, and the workings of the municipal government, while focusing on the city of New Orleans.[68] Long's book furthers the discussion on the complex coupling of prostitution with political and social agency, and adds further insights into the issues of race and class which permeated local legislative efforts to contain and control prostitution. Her analysis of the socioeconomic and political climate of New Orleans during the turn of the twentieth century has informed this study's chapter of New Orleans and its contextualization of prostitution.

For this study's chapter on New York City and *The New York Time*s' depiction of prostitution, both the histories of Timothy Gilfoyle and Marilyn Wood Hill have been indispensable. Marilynn Wood Hill's *Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City, 1830-1870*, has focused on the movement of prostitution to the center of public debate as a symbol of perceived moral disintegration of society.[69] She has also explored the ways in which prostitutes challenged traditional assumptions about women's roles.[70] Her work asserts that the moralistic rhetoric surrounding the sex trade "obscured society's prejudices against women who were poor and foreign, and whose lives suggested a social, economic, and sexual independence that was threatening to both social and patriarchal hierarchies."[71] Along with these notions, her work has helped this study to take into account the question of immigration influx, and its affect

on local tensions and prejudices.

Timothy Gilfoyle's history of New York prostitution has been of great help to this analysis. He has taken a historical look at prostitution in New York City that includes a larger time frame than Hill's, taking in the years 1790-1920. His work, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution and the Commercialization of Sex,* makes the distinctive argument that prostitution was geographically marginalized and socially isolated due to the organization of market forces located at the core of city social life.[72] Gilfoyle bolsters Hill's earlier conclusions about the widespread phenomena of female prostitution in the city, and also brings in an insightful look at homosexual prostitution as well. Gilfoyle's approach has influenced this study as it has made the geographical "mapping" of urban areas an effective tool in the analyzation of the "ordering" of public spaces.[73]

During the end of the nineteenth century, there was at least one "red light district" in virtually every American city with a population over 100,000, and in many of the smaller ones as well.[74] Because of the creation of "red light districts" in many of the major American cities, the physical geography of commercial sex was often understood in spatial terms.[75] These spatial distinctions separated cities into reputable and disreputable neighborhoods, attempting to overlay a sense of "order" onto the city's physical layout.[76] As a bifurcated and polarized way of dealing with city spaces, these demarcated areas reflected a cultural construction--- a bourgeois ideal of city life where social boundaries were clearly marked.[77] This "ordering" of the urban landscape was superficial at best. Commercial sex could not be easily segregated into isolated areas, or contained and controlled to the degree that reformers demanded.

Val Marie Johnson, in her dissertation "Defining Social Evil: Moral Citizenship and Governance in New York City, 1890--1920," has also looked at the creation of a moral discourse surrounding the definition of Social Evil, and occasionally uses press coverage in her analysis.[78]

Her work shows the clear political linkage between publicly disputed moral controversies concerning prostitution and the ways in which urban citizenship began to be defined, especially for the poor and immigrant classes. Her insights have added strength to this study's chapter on New York , and in particular to my arguments regarding the linking of prostitution to social tensions concerning race and immigration.

This study's chapter on London was greatly influenced by the work of Judith R. Walkowitz. She has been a leading voice in the study of the cultural dynamics and social struggles that informed nineteenth century discourses concerning gender, sexuality, and morality. Her work, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, focuses on the public discourse on sexual dangers which evolved in London's *Pall Mall Gazette*, and how it framed the reporting of specific sex related crimes.[79] Although this history does not focus on prostitution per se, Walkowitz' analyses of media generated narratives has added significant weight to the arguments in this study which link press coverage to larger social initiatives, and has aided in the analysis of these phenomena.

Walkowitz has also successfully utilized some of the framework of Foucauldian sexual theory in her analysis. Within her work she acknowledges Foucault's invaluable contribution to historical analyses, specifically in her recognition that "there was nothing natural or inevitable about sexual practices and meanings," and that much can be gleaned from textual examinations which reveal the "rhetorical, linguistic means by which people represent and understand their world."[80] Throughout her work she also maintains that narratives within the media represent the inequality of power amidst a proliferation of constructed cultural meanings. This basis in Foucauldian theory was also highly useful for this study on press coverage and prostitution, and helped to highlight the manner in which meanings are created within a specific historical context.

Saturated with poststructuralist theory, Walkowitz' historical analysis asks important and complex questions about the sociopolitical motivations which created a specific cultural environment for women, and how the media represented public concerns regarding women and the public sphere.[81] This conceptualization of the public sphere and women's movements within it is also central to a vital aspect of this study. This examination of press coverage has considered not only the depiction of prostitutes and the ordinances which attempted to control their activities, but also the manner in which public ordinances also affected the public movements of all women, regardless of status, class, or race.

The physical demarkation and policing of public space in regard to women was an issue of growing concern in American cities in the nineteenth century.[82] The public sphere was previously conceived of as a world inhabited primarily by men. Respectable single women were discouraged from leaving their houses, walking in public spaces, or traveling without a chaperone. Within this binary construction, women were relegated largely to the domestic sphere, and not thought of as active participants in the formation of society, but merely keepers of the hearth and home.[83] This notion of male/public and female/domestic spheres became increasingly difficult to maintain after the changes ushered in by the Industrial Revolution. As more and more women left their homes to work, travel, and generally move about more often without the accompaniment of men, social notions of respectability were challenged.[84]

It seems this social tension was especially evident in the ever-expanding metropolitan areas, and one that was resolved, partly, through the enactment of public policies. These ordinances marked the beginning of an era in which rules concerning women's actions in the public sphere were being instituted and actively enforced.[85] These public policies point to the growing presence of women in the public sphere in general, and the ways in which respectability were tied to issues related directly to class.[86] These enactments were also instrumental in linking

the policing and classification of women's public activities with notions of social reform. The debates which centered upon issues concerning women and the public sphere, the sex trade, and the legislation they inspired, were represented to the masses through their daily press.

Little research has examined the press coverage of prostitution in particular. Gretchen Soderlund has published one of very few articles which links these two issues in a historical examination. Her work, "Covering Urban Vice: *The New York Times*, "White Slavery," and the Construction of Journalistic Knowledge" has focused on the creation of cultural meaning by *The New York Times* in its coverage of "white slavery" between 1909 and 1910.[87] She contends that the white slavery narratives which proliferated in the commercial print media precipitated a "full-scale sexual and moral panic over the traffic in women," while simultaneously promoting *The Times*' own status as a prestigious and accurate source of news.[88] Her focus on the white slavery controversy has informed the third chapter of this study, which attempts to illuminate the complex sociocultural issues which surrounded this important topic in the early twentieth century.

This study intends to further highlight the role of the press as a crucial forum for the public debate over urban prostitution by analyzing the specific public discourses they presented to their readers. This study also seeks to explore how the relationship between the press and its public functioned to help create a specific social order within New Orleans, New York, and London which reflected the residents of these cities concerns about shifting conceptualizations of sexuality, morality, and gender.

Objective

Because of the lack of existing research which details the evolution of the depiction of prostitution in the media, this study provides a historical perspective on the manner in which

prostitution was portrayed by the press, including some of its larger contextual ramifications. In so doing, it analyzes the press' coverage of the sex trade and explores the terminology, attitudes, and connotations which became associated with prostitution at the turn of the twentieth century.

This work is part of a trend in academic scholarship which has reevaluated not only the shifting terms of sexual and moral discourses, but also the ways in which these discourses were used as extensions of existing socioeconomic power structures. I intend to further illuminate these issues by focusing on the manner in which the press has both reflected social concerns, and worked as an active participant in the formulation of public debate. I will do so by examining press coverage across the same timeline (1880-1917), but inclusive of three distinct metropolitan areas: New Orleans, New York, and London.

This study of the press' coverage of prostitution seeks to explore the complex political and cultural coupling between newspapers and their respective communities. In particular, its focus is on an evaluation of the daily press and how it functioned to impose a specific social and moral order on its public which reflected class-based socioeconomic tensions. This study attempts to analyze the discursive techniques employed by the forementioned New Orleans, New York, and London daily newspapers in their reportage of local prostitutes and prostitution in general. It seeks to address a relationship which, heretofore, has not been examined---the one between the most prominent metropolitan papers and their cities' most notorious local businesses. In particular, it seeks to analyze the press' reflection of social notions concerning gender and morality from the last years of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth through its depiction of prostitution within the community.

Research Procedure

A qualitative textual analysis of the depiction of some of the major characters and events concerning the local sex trade have been examined within the context of the changing social and moral concerns of the day. The newspapers used in this study were *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, (and its later incarnation as *The New Orleans Times-Picayun*e in 1914), *The New York Time*s, and *The London Times,* which were considered major dailies within their respective cities. Their stature as some of the most prominent and respected papers in these metropolitan areas helped to reinforce their position as one of the leading influences on their city's sense of community, and situated them as influential agenda-setters for the status-quo. The time frame within this study will reside between the years 1880 and 1917---the year when prostitution was officially pronounced illegal in New Orleans, Louisiana (two years after the enactment of similar legislation in New York).

Within its analysis of the role of the press in the formation of specific social constructions, this study also examined the ways in which respectability, sexuality, and appropriate behavior for men and women were undergoing crucial changes in the mid to late nineteenth century.[89] Of particular concern are those civic ordinances in which gender and class convened, acting to promote specific social hierarchies. This study intends to bring to light a very specific discourse which will be instrumental in revealing the unique relationship between these papers, and the societies they served.

The history of prostitution is characterized by a gradual change within the context of a given community. And, few sources offer such a vivid portrait of a given community as its daily press. As some of the most devalued members of society, female prostitutes have often existed outside of the boundaries of respectability, but their inclusion in the press attests to their presence within these communities. The press coverage of these women, and the issues which

surrounded them, sheds light on the ways in which they were both depicted and perceived. Moreover, a close analysis of the press reveals the efforts of a given municipality to deal with prostitution as a part of its community. As noted by historian Ruth Rosen, "the study of prostitution contributes to our knowledge of the lives and subcultures of historically 'invisible' groups such as working-class and immigrant women; in doing so, it offers new insights into the dominant culture as well."[90]

The overarching research question that this study employs is: How did *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *The New York Times*, and *The London Times* depict prostitution between 1880 and 1917, and how did this depiction shift to accommodate social, economic, and political changes?

RQ1: How did *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, *The New York Times*, and *The London Times* depict prostitution between 1880 and 1917?

RQ2: How did the terms and descriptive language used in these depictions link with prostitution with other social concerns?

RQ3: What did the press coverage and depiction of prostitution add to the formation of a particular public discourse concerning women, class, race, and changing notions of respectability and progress?

The first research question is concerned with the examination of this era, in order to better understand how prostitution was depicted, defined, and presented to the public. Understanding the portrayal of prostitution in this highly controversial era is essential for the exploration of the characterization of this press coverage and its effect on the public at large. Both the descriptive terminology, as well as the narratives in which these portrayals are contained, will serve to better answer research questions two. The third question will be addressed by bringing all of these elements together and analyzing their true content and connotations within the parameters of the

historical moment, and specifically, within the cities chosen.

Within this era (1880-1917), newspapers articles were selected that were written on and near the exact dates of the institution of specific public ordinances, as well as those articles which featured the sex trade and/or prominent individuals involved. In chapter two, *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, the New Orleans' daily newspaper with the highest circulation rates in the mid to late nineteenth century was used as one of three primary sources. The nineteen articles examined range from one to two sentence descriptions from the crime blotter, to nearly full page articles found in the sections of the paper concerned with local news stories. Articles were selected that were related to the commercial sex trade or to its regulation. These topics included police enforcement (both in prominant articles featuring arrests and court proceedings, as well as crime blotter listings), the local reformation movement and the civic organizations which comprised it, and articles which covered reformation legislation more generally.

In chapters three and four, *The New York Times* and *The London Times* were also utilized as source material. These publications' indexes were scanned for articles which dealt directly with the sex trade within these cities. Under a search for "prostitution" in general, articles were selected from *The New York Times* which dealt with vice, female trafficking, The Board of Police Commissioners meetings, reformation of Tammany Hall corruption, The Raines Law, The Tenderloin District, The Bureau of Social Hygiene, prominent reformation groups and their leaders (such as Dr. Parkhurst), The Mann Act of 1910, and prostitution as a "social evil." This search within *The New York Times* index yielded seventeen articles.

Under a similar search in *The London Times*, articles were selected which contained references to vice, female trafficking, reformation, The Contagious Diseases Acts, The National Vigilance Association, "The Case of Miss Cass," The Maiden Tribute, and prostitution as a "social evil." This list included twenty-one entries in total. And while these samples are not the

only articles related to the subject of prostitution in these respective cities, they constitute a very well-rounded characterization of this pivotal era.

Data Collection and Analysis

Within this study I looked for emerging themes, as well as changes in the manner in which these issues were related and reported to the public at large. Changes in press coverage during this era may be attributable to shifting moralistic standards, as well as changes in the manner in which newsworthy events were related to the public. Although these newspapers largely acted as an extension of societies that they served, fierce competition between newspapers sometimes spawned a style of journalistic reporting that distorted and exaggerated the facts at hand. After the depression of 1893, economic pressures increased the metropolitan dailies engagement in the sensational practices of yellow journalism in an attempt to win larger audiences.[91] Within this new journalistic style, newspapers began to exhibit an extreme activist ethos which was suggested by their campaigns, or crusades, against municipal corruption.[92] Through the measures of both typical and sensational reportage, these newspapers played an integral part in the fabrication of the artificial construction of social meaning within the scope of their influence.

This analysis has also paid attention to the "ordering" of society which played out in the moral narratives of these newspapers, as well as any inherent anxieties and tensions to be found in and around the evolution of the articulation of this sociocultural discourse. My intention was to analyze these articles by remaining cognizant of the language in which these issues were couched, and the specific moral overtones they ascribed. Throughout this study it has become evident that the narratives to be found within these publications offer a unique glimpse into the social climate of the times.

Notes:

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION, THEORY, LITERATURE REVIEW

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CHAPTER TWO

NEW ORLEANS: SOUTHERN DECADENCE

New Orleans has often been depicted as one of the most famous American epicenters for indulgence and decadence.[1] The history of the Storyville district, wherein prostitution was legally sanctioned between 1897 and 1917, after having been merely tolerated for the entirety of the city's history, has furthered the city's reputation as exceedingly tolerant of civic vice.[2] This reputation has been commercially exploited over the years as a marketing device to attract a burgeoning tourist trade to the Crescent City.[3] Between 1857 and 1917, the years commonly referred to as the "Gilded Age" of New Orleans, this exploitation became both an economic boon to the city, and a source of moral and social conflict.[4]

Although prostitution was largely tolerated, numerous ordinances were passed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that attempted to regulate and control the sex trade, which some believed had become a pervasive and unruly influence on the city.[5] Historian Alecia P. Long has noted that "by the early twentieth century, reformers from across the nation focused on New Orleans as an example of a city with a troubling history of and propensity for protecting its prostitution districts, tolerating sex across the color line within their boundaries, and profiting from its reputation for licentiousness."[6]

The city's uneasy relationship with its incredibly lucrative local sex trade became more problematic as public concerns over the proliferation of vice were voiced more loudly. Growing class concerns about the public semblance of respectability were part of the reformation campaign that sought to check the wealth and influence of local brothels and their keepers.[7] While a few male landlords would suffer from these ordinances, the affected businesses were comprised, almost exclusively, of women.[8] Moreover, the local movement to control these specific types of

businesses served to keep in check a distinct class of women who were able to achieve an unprecedented upturn in both their economic and social status.[9] This growing concern with establishing the city's reputation as a place of legitimate business, and the maintenance of specific social mores, gained increasing significance at the turn of the twentieth century.

Within the New Orleans community there emerged a problematic relationship between the city's municipal government and its various establishments known for licentious entertainment and illicit behavior. The civic creation of the city's most notorious "red light district," Storyville, is an example of how the city attempted to divide the downtown center of New Orleans into those areas deemed respectable and disrespectable, with the brothels, saloons, cabarets and other establishments of ill-repute belonging to the latter.[10] In this way, Storyville acted as both a social construction within the New Orleans community, and an actual physical area of division.[11] It was a physically "separate" area for the institutionalization of sexual commerce. The local ordinances which called for its creation were a manifestation of the sociopolitical climate in New Orleans, and the result of the concerns of the members of local reform movements.[12]

The press coverage of prostitution influenced the formation of specific social constructions in New Orleans society, and was also instrumental in articulating the ways in which respectability, sexuality, and appropriate behavior for men and women were undergoing crucial changes in the mid to late nineteenth century.[13] During this time, protests were aimed at the businesses which profited from the growing entertainment sectors of the city.[14] These businesses were located in areas that were also the homes for wealthy local families with children.[15] As these establishments increasingly were deemed immoral and disreputable, there grew a burgeoning demarkation line which would differentiate, not only on moral grounds, but also those which included notions of race, gender, and class.[16] Of particular concern to this study

of the New Orleans press are those civic ordinances in which gender and class convened, acting to promote specific social hierarchies.

This chapter analyzes mainstream mass media coverage of prostitution within a sample of nineteen news articles selected between 1880 and 1917, when the trade was officially declared illegal. This chapter seeks to explore the discursive techniques employed by the New Orleans daily press in its reportage of local prostitutes and prostitution in general, and intends to address the relationship between the most prominent New Orleans daily paper and its most notorious local businesses. In particular, it seeks to answer the question of how *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* reflected societal notions concerning gender and morality from the mid nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century.

A qualitative textual analysis of the depiction of some of the major characters and events concerning the local sex trade, has been conducted within the context of the changing social and moral concerns of the day. The newspaper used in this examination was *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, (and its later incarnation as *The New Orleans Times-Picayun*e in 1914), which had the highest circulation and local readership in New Orleans. The articles examined covered topics including police enforcement (both in prominant articles featuring arrests and court proceedings, as well as crime blotter listings), the local reformation movement and the civic organizations which comprised it, and articles which covered reformation legislation more generally. Within this sample, several themes emerged in the New Orleans press coverage of the sex trade which include the conceptual and physical creation of a separate vice district, the linking of economic prosperity to social reform, and the policing and classification of women's public activities. *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, as one of the most prominent voices of the New Orleans community, was instrumental in the casting of prostitution as a social and moral evil, and the antithesis of respectability.

The Daily Picayune and the New Orleans Community

Since the mid-nineteenth century, American newspapers increasingly moved away from their partisan past in order to achieve a broader view of local and national events, gain larger audiences, and help sustain a more cohesive sense of community.[17] This appears to have been true for *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, as its content and structure were similar to the other dailies of large American cities. Throughout the thirty-seven year period of concern for this study, there is a reflection in *The Daily Picayune* of the city's ongoing concern with notions regarding its reputation and its affect on the city's future growth and prosperity. New Orleans, as a quickly growing port city with a host of national and international influences, depended at least partially on the cohesive sense of community identity that could be found in the pages of its local daily paper.[18] *The Picayune* promoted itself as an active part of the New Orleans community, lending "its influence and support to principles rather than parties" giving the latest news, and commending itself to the public as a "Southern family newspaper."[19]

The Daily Picayune claimed the largest circulation of the Southeast, although records of its early circulation numbers from its inception in 1847, and for several decades afterwards, are scant. By 1872, the paper boasted daily sales of 12, 260, compared to the 9,500 of its rival, *The New Orleans Times*.[20] Its stature as the most widely read paper in the city guaranteed its position as the leading influence on the area's sense of community, as well as the agenda-setter for the status-quo. *The Daily Picayune*, then, was the main media source whereby social cohesion was reinforced, and social norms were reflected and perpetuated.[21]

This sense of status-quo was not only a priority of local concern, as these larger dailies also sought to cement the city's reputation within the growing fabric of American life. Its original editors, Francis A. Lumsden and George Wilkings Kendell, founded the newspaper with the idea of being an "independent press" which "aims to discuss public questions with an eye to the

general welfare of the whole country."[22] The newspaper published a mix of international, national, and local news, which in its format, made New Orleans an integral part of the major events of the nineteenth century, and a city which hoped to keep pace with the progressive developments of its sister cities.

In an editorial published on March 26, 1876, *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* promised its readers that the paper's new management would maintain the journalistic standards to which the journal had always been held. The paper further promised to remain as "a strictly independent journal," which "would endeavor to make itself the friend of the people rather than the champion of politicians."[23] More important to the focus of this study, the journal promised to remain a family newspaper and to "refuse to offend the instincts of modesty and to disregard the claims of propriety in order to pander to a prurient appetite for the disgusting details of private scandal."[24] In *The Picayune*'s promotional advertisements the paper also recommended itself to the growing New Orleans populace as the oldest, most popular, and most influential newspaper in the Southwest.[25] The journal called itself an independent conservative paper designed to promote the commercial, mechanical, agricultural, and industrial interests of the Southern people.[26]

From the late 1800s, through the early twentieth century, it is this sense of communal progressive development that is most clearly evident in the paper's editorials. The tone seemed to be a growing concern with New Orleans' national reputation and its effect on the city's ability to attract business and to expand economically. The combined effects of the Civil War, Occupation, and Restoration, had left the city with growing need to recast itself within the national consciousness.[27] As cross-country communication, travel, and trade became easier, the city's national reputation had become a point of contention for the local government, and one which they actively worked to alter.[28]

` **Social Hierarchies and the Containment of Vice**

In 1857, the local government enacted its first comprehensive prostitution ordinance, known as the Lorette Ordinance.[29] It required that prostitutes vacate single-story buildings, and the ground floors of those with multiple stories, to make the practice of prostitution less visible. The ordinance also forbade solicitation on the street, indecent dress, and the creation of scandal or disturbance by individual prostitutes, under the threat of fines as high as twenty-five dollars or thirty days in jail.[30] It also established licensing fees for both prostitutes and their landlords. The legislation was primarily devised to regulate, rather than to stifle the sex trade. It delineated four large geographic boundaries wherein prostitution could continue to be practiced and would be tolerated by the local authorities.[31] The houses of assignation the ordinance targeted would be situated within the following limits of the city:

> In the First District--between the river, Felicity Road, Hercules,
> the New Canal, Claiborne and Canal Streets.
> In the Second District--between the river and Basin Street, Canal
> and Toulouse Streets, and between the river, the Bayou St. Joseph,
> Toulouse Street and Esplanade Street.
> In the Third District--between Esplanade Street, Elysian Fields,
> the river and Broad Street.
> In the Fourth District--between the river, the Carrollton Railroad,
> the upper line of said district and Felicity Road.[32]

This ordinance was as one of the first steps taken by the local legislature to reorder the city's social structure---both conceptually and physically.[33] The intent was to move the sex trade from the street level, thereby making the practice less visible, and less offensive to those who lived and worked in the same proximity.[34] This notion of removing these women from the street itself had become an integral part of the new restrictions. It served many purposes. Not only did

it make commercial sex trade less visible, it also gave the appearance that the enactment of reforms were effective. The ordinances were also instrumental in defining what was, and was not, socially acceptable behavior for a woman in public.[35]

The ordinance which in 1897 created the "red light district" of New Orleans called Storyville was a later incarnation of this same principle.[36] In the new, and remarkably smaller, vice district local authorities officially proscribed, but unofficially tolerated prostitution. The ordinance was prepared and sponsored by Alderman Sidney Story, a prominent local businessman. His name was used in the title "Storyville" as a mockery of his attempt to contain local vice.[37] This district existed until 1917, when prostitution was officially made illegal.[38] Storyville was actually comprised of two areas; 1) bounded by Basin Street, St. Louis Cemetery No. 1, St. Louis Street, the Carondelet Canal, and Robertson Street, 2) above Canal Street four additional blocks were added.[39]

In June 1865, three months after the end of the Civil War, the city government passed another ordinance designed to further control the still prolific local sex trade.[40] Further limitations were placed on the activities and movement of women in public who were thought to be soliciting on the street. Several more such ordinances were created over the years which sought to either revise the original, or to inhibit the sex trade through other means.[41] In some instances, these ordinances tried to control the sex trade through multiple channels. Indirectly, the regulation of prostitution was also contained within ordinances which targeted concert saloons, beer halls and/or any public drinking establishment.[42] These parlors were often in the same neighborhoods as the licensed brothels, and flourished through a symbiotic relationship with them. They, too, were prime targets for local reformation legislature which sought to draw clear lines between the disorderly and respectable parts of the city.

This new physical demarcation and policing of public space in regard to women was an

issue of growing concern in American cities in the nineteenth century.[43] As more and more women left their homes to work, travel, and generally move about more often without the accompaniment of men, social notions of respectability were challenged.[44] This social tension also existed in the ever-expanding New Orleans community, and was resolved partly through the enactment of policies like the Lorette and Storyville Ordinances.

The Lorette Ordinance was initially enacted to create some semblance of control over the aggressive manner in which some prostitutes solicited for trade.[45] One problematic aspect of this policy can be found in its defining terms. There was some ambiguity in what constituted public "scandal or disturbance," or, what "lewd and abandoned" behavior entailed.[46] This ambiguity allowed for the arrest of women for a variety of reasons, from merely standing alone on a public street, to openly soliciting men in disruptive and offensive ways.[47] These policies, although ambiguous, did make distinctive evaluative judgments about women and their public freedoms. They marked the beginning of an era in which rules concerning women's actions in the public sphere were being instituted and actively enforced.[48]

These ordinances also point to the growing presence of women in the public sphere in general, and the ways in which respectability was tied to issues related directly to class.[49] Women who walked alone sometimes took the risk of being mistaken for "a public woman" instead of simply a woman out in public.[50] Public spaces in the city were comprised of people of all classes, races, and various ethnic identities.[51] New Orleans was, and is, a city where lower class and derelict areas sit adjacent to antebellum mansions with manicured gardens. Burgeoning concerns which directly tied the female populace to notions of respectability attest to this potential for the blurring of class lines. Clear lines of demarkation were needed, to preserve existing social hierarchies, and to protect the virtues of respectable women.[52]

This ordering of society can clearly be seen in the nineteen articles of *The Daily Picayune*

examined for this study. *The Picayune* covered the passing of major ordinances in the legislature, and published articles of some of the arrests and trials of the women who were found to be in violation of local ordinances.[53] Even the publication's intent to remain a "family newspaper," did not allow it to completely ignore this element of the New Orleans social world. In fact, the manner in which it addressed this issue helped to frame these stories in a very specific light, and aided in the social construction of an overworld/underworld ordering of the city.

In articles published in 1892 and onward, *The Picayune* regularly argued that the separation of neighborhoods based on social class, and the activities attributed to them, was essential to the city's prosperity.[54] A fire, on February 17, 1892, had destroyed a popular beer garden and concert saloon in the French Quarter, inspiring one *Picayune* editor to celebrate the recent "purification" of that area. The editorial stated that "Royal and Bourbon Streets, two of the most important streets [in the city], have been purified by fire of those objectionable establishments. Let them remain so, and in the future if we are to have any more of these dives, let them be removed and confined to some less objectionable locality."[55]

Concert saloons had already been targeted by local legislature in an effort to control their activities. They were notorious in the city, not only for the "drunken disorderliness" that they fostered, but also as businesses in which women of ill repute applied their trade.[56] In 1890, an act provided that these establishments must pay a licensing fee of $1,000 per annum.[57]

In a front page story, *The Picayune* published the details of the ordinance, including the definition of the kinds of offensive establishments which the authors of the ordinance had in mind. The article stated, "that for any place where cancan, clodoche, or other similar female dancing, or sensation performance, or statutory exhibitions are shown, or or any other fixed place for either theatrical, musical, minstrel, concert, dancing, or variety performance, exhibition or amusement on show" licensing would be necessary.[58] It further stated that "nothing in this

section shall apply to any respectable place of business." [59]

Clearly, certain businesses were being singled out as belonging to a lower class status and for encouraging what was publicly being determined as immoral behavior. Some prominent city officials and business men were working in collusion to enact the types of policies they were convinced would lessen the city's crime, and bring respectability to the downtown merchants.[60] *The Picayune* played its part in its framing of similar articles to portray these establishments as the immoral underworld of the city, which needed continual policing and surveillance of the activities carried on within.

Businesses targeted by the ordinances were described in degrading and licentious terms. This can be seen in a 1909 *Picayune* article about a red light district establishment called The New Waldorf Cafe. Run by the "notorious Ada Hayes, who operated a saloon in the front and a dance dive in the rear," the establishment was put out of business because of the "rowdy manner in which the place was conducted."[61] The news article also stated that "women gather in the place each night and hold high revel in the dance hall in the rear."[62] Portrayals like these sought to depict these establishments and their inhabitants as the bane of the city, an element which resisted "the latest attempt to polish up the morals of the denizens."[63] Apparently, businesses such as these were allowing the sort of public behavior by women which the city ordinances hoped to curtail. They were depicted as disorderly public houses which, ostensibly, no respectable member of society would stoop to enter.

The city's vice ordinances were specifically targeted toward maintaining control over the women (and men) who profited from the sex trade. In the analysis of the press coverage of reformation edicts, it is evident that New Orleans had a long and varied history of sex across class lines.[64] Growing concerns about the containment of vice in the city led to new civic ordinances which sought to redraw the lines between the respectable citizenry and those complicit with its

corrupt underbelly. In one *Picayune* article, this class-based social hierarchy is clearly stated. A reporter protests that,

> It is a shameful thing if a licensed saloon...outside of the slums can be used for infamous or immoral purposes. The city government is trying to drive vice and immorality out of the most prominent localities, and into obscure neighborhoods, where decent people will not be constantly offended by their open and shameless flauntings.[65]

In this newly conceived demarcation lay the restructuring of the socioeconomic and political power of the city, for the protection of some, and for the denigration of others.

The Linking of Economic Prosperity and Moral Reform

After the passing of the Lorette Ordinance, *The Picayune* often published articles which attempted to mark the moral and social progress of the city.[66] While many of these articles did not address this ordinance in general, or the city's growing concerns about the sex trade in particular, they did attempt to portray the city as a vastly improving metropolis full of "omens for the future growth and greatness of the city."[67] Although these articles never explicitly addressed the city's current reputation, these news stories speak volumes about the kind of reputation which the "city fathers" would have liked for their community. This knowledge was taken for granted as "known" by the reader, and not something upon which the press wanted, nor needed, to dwell. What was reported was the aspiration of the city to move beyond its past limitations in the creation of a better future.[68] It was the hope of the city leaders that more families would remain throughout the year, and that more of the "industrious, laboring and mechanical classes make it their personal home here and add to the prosperity of the city, by their thrift and custom."[69] Some community leaders hoped that "the idea would soon pass away

that New Orleans is not habitable, as other cities, by a fixed population of industrious and active citizens."[70]

The tone and content of this article is a recurrent theme in press articles from the 1880s through 1917. *The Picayune* often referred to the major civic improvements to the city over the years as evidence of its progress and development. Improved roads, extended rail service, and more dependable mail routes were generally touted as adding to a better standard of living, as well as bringing New Orleans "into closer communication with a wider range of the country" and "dissipat(ing) a great many prejudices which used to exist against the city as a residence or place of resort."[71] Civic progress, as depicted in *The Picayune*, was bound up with burgeoning conceptions of modernization, industrialization, and economic prosperity in general. Vice and corruption were meant to be displaced by the collective and beneficial influences of better standards of living.

One *Picayune* editorial argued that reform and retrenchment in the government were necessary for post-Reconstruction economic revival. It proposed that reformation was most greatly needed in two areas: 1) in the existing disorder and violence, which it contended led insecurity to life and property, and 2) in state finances.[72] As noted by Lamar Whitlow Bridges, "Reconstruction government in New Orleans had increased the city's debt from $9,930, 096.25 in 1868, to a peak of $22,041,378.60 in 1876."[73] Prosperity and social progress were the mantra of the day. *The Daily Picayune* was instrumental in linking these two notions within the public consciousness.

Social reform was depicted as an essential forerunner of economic growth and stability, and vital to the city's future prosperity.[74] From the social reformers' perspective, the city's problem with prostitution was not merely a moral evil, this vice also represented the most visible and sordid part of an antiquated economic structure which prevented New Orleans from keeping

pace with its rival cities in controlling the South's trade.[75] Merchants composed the driving force in many of the anti-prostitution campaigns, and often backed political parties that promised to eradicate this vice.[76] Those who worked toward the abolition of prostitution were also convinced that its end would make more housing available to respectable citizens, and preserve the property value in decent residential areas.[77]

An 1889 article titled "How New Orleans is Improving" also expressed the city's desire to show "signs of progress" in the embellishment and beautification of New Orleans and in the extension of local merchants' trade to other parts of the country.[78] Editorials like this one not only provided information about how the community was growing and expanding, but also intended to foster a sense of civic pride. They, too, were part of this flourishing community and had a stake in its future. In fact, the paper encouraged the application of new policies which could help to ensure the future betterment and prosperity of the city. It argued for the community to employ "the inevitable fruits of a policy and energy which are entirely within our power."[79] The paper furthered the idea of policy enactment as a progressive means in its assertion that "there is a great future for this city, socially and commercially, if we are not wanting to ourselves, as men of ordinary instincts and intelligence, were never wanting before."[80] In other words, the best was yet to come, as long as the right government policies were put into place.

This attitude of civic progress was a recurring theme in *The Picayune*'s editorials. The editors of newspaper saw the first day of the new year as the perfect day for the city to take in the past year's achievements and to look toward New Orleans' budding future. A lengthy article published on January 1, 1898, is a good example of this editorial predilection. It begins with an assessment of all the commercial gains made in the city, and further elaborates on its natural position as "one of the greatest ports in the world" and "one of the finest, richest, vastest, most

magnificent sections of the country on the face of the inhabitable globe"[81]---no small praise for the wonders of the Crescent City. It expounded upon the progresses of the city in all areas, including "the realization of the dreams of the Municipal Improvement Company, and all the great works of drainage, sewerage, etc."[82] The article concluded with the importance of renewed attempts to reform the city's "drunkards, gamblers and debauchees" to "save themselves, their families, and society."[83] Articles such as these never seemed to directly address the issue that a large portion of the city's revenue stemmed from the kinds of establishments which encouraged drinking, gambling, and debauchery, even while "respectable" citizens chose to look the other way.[84]

In 1898, there were also city plans to build a newer and better equipped mission to aid with the "spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor" discussed in *The Picayune*.[85] The establishment would also contain "a home for fallen women" who were "sick, tired, and disgusted with their present lives, and not only willing, but anxious to reform."[86] While this may have been true for some of the lower class prostitutes barely making a living in the cheaper houses of assignation, the same could not be said of the many women employed by the more profitable and opulent brothels which existed at this time.[87] This article is an example of how prostitutes were grouped as a single identity regardless of their economic situations or social connections. Ostensibly, all fallen women were the same, and needed the guiding hand of local reformists to help them out of their plight.

Clearly, *The Picayune* acted as a mouthpiece for the maintenance of the city's elite, reflecting the intended direction of civic matters. Its editorials painted a clear picture of which sections of the New Orleans populace were welcome, and those which were not. As the reformation movement gained steam at the end of the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, *The Picayune* often featured articles which noted the "good works" being done by local civic organizations, such as The Men's Business League, the various New Orleans

Women's Societies, and The Citizen's League.[88]

These articles, which focused on social reformation, often referred to the city's broad menu of social vices under the collective title of Social Evil. In 1917, an article on The Citizen's League of Louisiana detailed the group's responsibility for "the crusade recently inaugurated against vice and law violations in this city."[89] They were particularly concerned with the lack of enforcement of the local vice laws and ordinances, and called for renewed vigor in their campaign. The League asserted that "the greatest evidence against the manhood of this city is the existence of cabarets, the restricted district, and places of assignation in our midst. We contend that the laws concerning the social evil should be enforced."[90] By 1917, many of the vice ordinances had been in place for decades. It seems obvious that these policies were never fully enforced, and that, in fact, it was impossible to do so. Moreover, it was not in everyone's interests to do so, least of all for the local police force, which was regularly paid off by some brothel and saloon keepers.[91]

Prostitution was, and continued to be, a major local industry. It is estimated that at its height, between ten and fifteen million dollars were spent in the red light district each year.[92] And, it was not only the prostitutes who benefitted from the sex trade. Landlords became wealthy by renting dwellings to harlots and brothel keepers, and managers of large ballrooms grew rich by entertaining their guests with prostitutes. Local lawyers also collected hefty fees for defending clients who were in the business and required representation in the courts. Even some off-duty policemen earned extra income by working as private watchmen at night for the larger and more lucrative establishments.[93]

The prevalence of articles which targeted these establishments are testament to the continued concern of the local citizens about notions of class and respectability. They illustrate how the legal, economic, social, and moral concerns of the day intersected within New Orleans

culture, and pointed to the underlying tensions which these connections created. The city's business men and local legislators were well aware that much of their revenue was due, in part, to the existence of the vice district. It continued to be a major attraction for tourists and conventioneers alike, pouring millions of dollars annually into local pockets.[94] The enforcement of restrictive legislation was, then, primarily, a way to keep the reformist movement satiated while still allowing for these businesses to flourish, albeit, in a slightly restricted manner.

After some legislative measures had been put into place to keep the disorderly saloons, cafes and hotels in town in check, local business men rallied to protect their business interests, claiming "they were busy when prohibitive laws were being passed, and only realized [the] harm done when business fell off."[95] Only too cognizant that New Orleans' main attractions were the types of businesses which had been targeted by more restrictive licensing laws, these local merchants called for their repeal. They argued that "New Orleans was the largest city in the South, and it was a city to which people came to be amused, and have a good time, and not to attend sacred concerts."[96] In their argument, these middle to upper-class business owners were also careful to make a clear distinction between the lower-class establishments which required surveillance, and the respectable ones which should be left to carry on their business. They stated that

> What was needed was to provide high-class amusement for the visitors....A saloon properly conducted was in no sense an injury to a city... Saloons which kept open all night should be closed at a reasonable hour, and those which admitted minors and girls and women, should be abolished.[97]

Here, the division between the acceptable and disorderly businesses is clearly drawn. Not wanting to sacrifice the tourist trade, while still pandering to local and politically charged reformation incentives, local merchants attempted to locate themselves within the respectable

boundaries of the city while still profiting from its most contentious elements---liquor sales, female entertainment, and other "diversions."[98]

Not everyone agreed with this notion of negotiated leniency for some businesses. Reformation efforts in the following years increased the pressure on municipal officials to crack down on disorderly places of business. A letter to the editor of *The Picayune* decried the city's past reputation of degeneracy, claiming "Orleanians have slept the sleep of their undoing" and heralding the merits of the reformation efforts.[99] The writer contended that it was time for the city to "awaken to a consciousness of their insight...in the fulfillment of destiny, for it has been decreed that New Orleans shall take her place in the galaxy of American cities, inspired by the spirit of modernism, its ideals and purposes."[100] In this diatribe, moral reformation is once again linked with economic and social progress. She emphatically states that, "the end desired must be strongly representative of a singleness of purpose to win the support of an overwhelming public sentiment in favor of wholesome moral and political conditions."[101]

When the city's municipal authorities did officially outlaw prostitution at the end of 1917, the local legislature did so only under the influence of the federal authorities. With the country's preparation for World War I, military encampments were installed in New Orleans due to its well-situated port. To maintain local naval training stations, and their boon to the local economy, it became necessary to adhere to the restrictions of the Selective Service Act. This federal act outlawed any form of prostitution within five to ten miles around each camp, making the vice district a prime target. Although Storyville's official boundaries of tolerance ended at this time, many brothels continued to operate, appeasing local authorities by turning away men in uniform.[102]

The Disorderly Women of the Crime Blotter

While *The Daily Picayune* may have not given much attention to matters concerning the local sex trade in its attempt to remain a "family newspaper," there was one area of its reportage where this institution was not so easily ignored. Much of the journal's copy during this period was devoted to courts and crimes. The paper's daily crime blotter is a small window onto the realities of this overlooked segment of the population. These small reports of local arrests range from one or two sentences to several paragraphs of description. The terms used in these news stories employ the same discursive terms used in the full-length features to portray their subjects, and reveal the paper's distinctive moral undertones.

Women had become intrinsically bound up with notions of morality and respectability in the mid to late nineteenth century.[103] This was especially true in the conservative South, where respectable women were often depicted as passionless guardians of virtue.[104] They embodied society's every ideal. Once fallen, however, women were regarded as evil, tainted, and a threat to common morals and decency.[105] Disreputable women were seen as outside the boundaries of normal communal life, and were depicted as dangerous fringe elements. They were often described in terms of being insane, hysterical, and/or diseased.[106] Some of this terminology of "othering" can be found in *The Picayune*'s copy concerning vice arrests, and is evidence of the paradoxical ideals which women represented to the public at large.

In 1857, the descriptions of women in violation of the Lorette Ordinance were found under the heading "Police Matters." The women arrested were often depicted in terms of either being "drunken," "disorderly," or "notorious," and as "inmates of disorderly houses."[107] These women were also described as having "fallen from the high estate of naive purity," and found "walking in the ways of wickedness."[108] While these types of descriptions continued after the Lorette Ordinance was passed, they were often replaced by the simple phrase "lewd and

abandoned," a slight rephrasing of the original text. Although the original phrasing suggested that these women were acting with reckless abandon and carelessness, the phrase "lewd and abandoned" suggested that these women were somehow also forsaken, isolated from respectable society. It seems to further marginalize them by placing them outside of the parameters of decency and morality, with little or no hope for redemption.

Women who were arrested under the ordinance for "women abandoned to lewdness" were described using this phrasing for the entire period this study takes in. It became a shorthand way to report their offense while not offering any real details about how they may have been in violation. "Lewd and abandoned" were the only words needed to cast the woman as a prostitute, regardless of her situation. The following are typical examples:

> Millie Young, Olivia Benoit, Lucia Labatt, and Lucia Young,
> lewd and abandoned, were paroled.[109]
>
> Claudia Peterson was sent down for thirty days for violating
> the ordinance relative to lewd and abandoned women.[110]
>
> Jane Robinson, lewd and abandoned, was fined $5 or 10 days.[111]
>
> Martha Metager, lewd and abandoned, $10 or 30 days.[112]

It is probable that this category was a catchall for any woman whom the police felt was out of line in some way. Undoubtedly, more of these women than not were disturbing the peace in some manner, but whether or not they were actually soliciting on the street remains unclear. Some of these women may have been simply vagrants, or recent immigrants unaware of the local ordinances.[113] The ability of the ordinance to cover multiple facets of a woman's activities, dress, and deportment as evidence of her immoral character made it a highly effective tool for policing women of a lower status.[114] Within this policy, immorality and certain public behaviors had become intertwined, creating the notion of a disreputable underworld which required constant

policing.

An 1881 articled titled "A Social Evil," addressed a complaint made to Mayor Joseph A. Shakespeare about Sarah Bell, the madame of a "disorderly house" on St. Joseph Street.[115] She was accused of insulting and abusing several persons "whom necessity compelled to pass this den of inequity."[116] The piece stated that the mayor had consulted later with the chief of police in an effort "to abate the nuisance, which has been the subject of complaint among respectable persons residing in the vicinity for several years past."[117] The proprietress was arrested and locked up at central station until her parole that Friday. Her arraignment was later detailed under the column "City Hall Matters." Bell was sentenced to seek another location for her business within five days.[118]

As a public nuisance, Bell suffered under the same assumptions made for every woman in her profession. As women who challenged conventional notions about domesticity and sexual restraint, they posed a threat to moral standards and social order.[119] They were thought to be capable of degrading themselves, and the men they solicited, with their corrupt sexual wiles. By destroying the moral fiber of the community, fallen women were also thought to introduce weak men to rum, induce young girls to join their trade, and recruit all manner of city dwellers to the ranks of their dangerous class.[120] Their removal was promoted as an assurance that urban society would be safeguarded from their immoral influence.

As the entrepreneurial heads of many of the largest brothels in town, local madames were also singled out for their ability to influence various elements of society.[121] One of the most famous and successful brothel keepers in New Orleans was the subject of a series of articles in *The Daily Picayune*. Hattie Hamilton ran the "Twenty-One," a three-story brick mansion, and one of the most lavishly appointed houses of assignation in town.[122] She only came under the scrutiny of the local police when her live-in lover, Senator James Bears, was found dead on her

floor. She was described in the piece as "the proprietress of a disreputable house on Basin Street," and the prime suspect of his murder.[123] The senator's brother chose not to make an affidavit against Hamilton, and she was never formally arrested. The general belief afterward was that Hattie Hamilton had become privy to so many of the Senator's secret misdoings that his family was unable to implicate her, for fear of her "telling all" to the press.[124]

Whether or not this story is completely accurate, this news article is prime example of how the upper classes of New Orleans society were able to delve into the underworld without tarnishing their reputations. It also speaks volumes about the levels of social mobility and prestige that some of the madames were able to attain. Moreover, it also serves to illustrate how the social construction of New Orleans society into the respectable/disorderly paradigm was, at best, superficial. Corruption in the ranks of the local police and politicians alike guaranteed their involvement in the seedier aspects of civic life, and their personal interest in its continued existence.[125]

Well known prostitutes, and madames, as well as prostitution in general, had become for New Orleans society a type of scapegoat, upon which all of the city's social evils could rest. Since the reformation movement was so closely tied to issues concerning civic economic advancement, it was necessary to paint the local sex trade in terms which made its licentiousness a major threat to communal prosperity---an element that required eradication. *The Daily Picayune*, as an extension of New Orleans society, played a part in the fabrication of this artificial social construction, an "othering" which helped to create the notion of a corrupt vice-ridden underworld separate from the city's upper classes.

Conclusion

Articles in *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, in the sample examined from 1880 to 1917, attempted to fix and define the city's underworld as an unruly cultural counterpart, separate from the civilized and respectable strata of local citizenry. The coverage of brothels and other houses of assignation was couched in language which ascribed specific moral undertones, setting these institutions apart from the rest of the New Orleans public. This study of *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* has explored the inherent anxieties of this constructed mode of differentiation, as found in the pages of the city's most prominent daily newspaper. This local newspaper reflected the civic need for this type of social construction as it enabled the public vilification of a highly visible and economically prominent sex trade, while allowing it to remain as an undeniable part of the city's social fabric.

Several themes emerged in the New Orleans press coverage of the sex trade which include the conceptual and physical creation of a separate vice district, the linking of economic prosperity to social reform, and the policing and classification of women's public activities. *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, as the most prominent voice of the upper-class stata of the New Orleans community, was instrumental in the casting of prostitution as a social and moral evil, and the antithesis of respectability. In its coverage of the local ordinances and their violators, it has repeatedly argued in favor of the creation of a separate vice district as essential to the future growth and prosperity of the community at large. The physical boundaries which kept the "disorderly" segment of the city apart from the respectable were an extension of this mindset, and served to create the illusion of control and containment.

It is also clear that the proliferation of commercial sex, combined with changing standards for public activity, was a source of anxiety within New Orleans. As ideas concerning women's acceptable place in public were transforming, women's movements on the city streets became

more difficult to clearly define and control. In an increasingly anonymous city, the same standards of respectable behavior could no longer be sustained. The boundaries of brothel prostitution were an effort to alleviate this newly defined problem, and a way to reinforce the social stratification of the city and maintain "moral order."

The policing of "lewd and abandoned women," which was also part of this notion of maintaining order within the city, was an artificial social construction perpetuated in the New Orleans daily press. Ordinances which allowed local authorities to apprehend and arrest women, based on their dress, conduct, and public activities became a convenient tool of the reformation movement. In their execution, these ordinances linked the immorality of the sex trade to larger notions of public respectability and economic advancement, and the changing roles of women in the public sphere.

Interestingly, none of the articles, nor any of the descriptions of women in the crime blotter, mentioned the race of the woman involved. Although there are various terms which clearly denote the class status of these women, race was not singled out as a significant factor. As Alecia P. Long has stated, "Prostitution ordinances were the city's first residential segregation ordinances---enforced not on the basis of race, but on the basis of gender, occupation, and the public identification of a woman as a prostitute."[126] It is also interesting to note that the "white slave trafficking" controversy which became so prevalent in the New York and London press, was not found in the articles examined from *The Picayune*. This may be due to the fact that the government investigation led by the American Senate into the importation and harboring of women for immoral purposes in 1909, ranked the following cities in order of their involvement: New York, Seattle, San Francisco, San Antonio, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, and so on.[127] New Orleans was not considered as a major port through which this type of "commerce" was conducted. That is not to say that this controversy did not exist within the New Orleans

community, but only that it did not receive as much attention in *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* as in other national and international newspapers.

The articles examined did reveal New Orleans' social anxieties as related to the regulation of prostitution. These anxieties were only partially satisfied in the creation of a vice district. The attempt to confine the sex trade to a particular area of the city exemplifies the artificial notion of prostitution as existing in a hidden, underworld, and lower-class district, and catering only to the lowest dregs of society. As these connotations became increasingly connected to commercialized sex by the machinations of New Orleans elite, and the institution of local legislature, this segment of the population which had once been so celebrated, was driven, largely, to the margins of society. In this process of mass vilification of the sex trade, reformationists had shifted their focus from "saving the souls" of individual prostitutes to viewing prostitutes collectively as a Social Evil which should be placed out of the public eye.

Notes:

CHAPTER TWO

NEW ORLEANS: SOUTHERN DECADENCE

1. See, for example, Al Rose, *Storyville, New Orleans: Being an Authentic, Illustrated account of the Notorious Red Light District* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1974) and Herbert Asbury, *The French Quarter: An Informal History of the New Orleans Underworld* (New York:
Garden City Publishing, 1938).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Alecia P. Long, *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).
5. See Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
6. Long, 4.
7. See, for example, Marilynn Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City 1830-1870 (*Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and Long, *Babylon*.
8. Long, *Babylon*.
9. See for example Long,s chapter on "Unusual Situations and Remarkable People" and Asbury's chapter "Some Loose Ladies on Basin Street."
10. See, for example Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
11. Long, *Babylon*, 107.
12. Ibid.
13. See for example, Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) and Carroll.Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).
14. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
15. Long, 109.
16. Long, *Babylon.*
17. Gerald Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 31.
18. For notions concerning the media in the creation of community, see for example, Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News*, and Michael Schudson, "Preparing the Minds of the People: Three Hundred Years of the American Newspaper," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 1990 100 (2): 421-443.
19. Lamar Whitlow Bridges, "A Study of *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* under Publisher Eliza Poitevent Nicholson, 1876-1896." (Southern Illinois University dissertation, 1974), 31.
20. Rowell, Geo.P. and Co. *The American Newspaper Directory* (New York: Geo.P. Rowell and Co.,1872).
21. Schudson, *Preparing the Minds of the People.*
22. *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Dec. 21, 1847.
23. Ibid, March 26, 1876.
24. Ibid.
25. Bridges, 31.
26. Ibid.
27. See for example, Richard Tansey, "Prostitution and Politics in Antebellum New Orleans." *Southern Studies* 18:4, 449-479, and Long, *Babylon*.
28. Ibid.
29. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Long, *Babylon, 103.*
34. Long, 109.
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid, 105.
37. Ibid.
38. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
39. Ibid.
40. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
41. Long, 89.
42. Ibid.
43. See for example, Ryan, Mary. *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) and Carroll.Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).
44. Ibid.
45. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
46. Long, 96.
47. Long, 76.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. See for example, Mary Ryan, *Women in Public.*
51. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
52. Long, *Babylon, 69.*
53. Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter*.
54. Ibid.
55. Front page, *Picayune*, Feb., 17, 1892.
56. Long, 89.
57. "Concert Saloons," *Picayune,* April 22, 1890.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, Asbury, and *The French Quarter.*
61. "Exnicious First to Test Liquor Law," *Picayune*, Jan. 7, 1909.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Long, 193.
65. Front page, *Picayune*, Jan. 1, 1898.
66. For example: "Concert Saloons," *Picayune,* April 22, 1890, "How New Orleans Is Improving," Nov. 13, 1889, and the front page Jan. 1, 1898.
67. "Changes in New Orleans," *Picayune*, May 3, 1857.
68. For example: "Concert Saloons," *Picayune,* April 22, 1890, "How New Orleans Is Improving," Nov. 13, 1889, and the front page Jan. 1, 1898.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid, 64.
73. Ibid.
74. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
75. Tansey, "Prostitution and Politics in Antebellum New Orleans," 449.
76. Ibid, 472.
77. Ibid.
78. "The City,"*Picayune,* May 3, 1857.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid, Front page, Jan., 1, 1898.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
85. Front page, *Picayune*, Jan., 1, 1898.
86. Ibid.
87. See for example Long's chapter on "Unusual Situations and Remarkable People" and Asbury's chapter "Some Loose Ladies on Basin Street."

88. See for example*:* Front page *Picayune* Jan.1, 1898, "Citizens' League Explains Reasons for Its Existence," Jan. 21, 1917, and "Business Men's League Formed at Mass Meeting," Jan.6, 1909.
89. Ibid, Jan., 21, 1917.
90. Ibid.
91. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
92. Rose, *Storyville*, 31.
93. Tansey, 449.
94. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
95. "Business Men's League Formed At Mass Meeting," *Picayune*, Jan. 6, 1909.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. See Long's chapter "The Business of Pleasure."
99. "Citizens' League Explains Reasons For Its Existence," *Picayune*, Jan. 21, 1917.
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
103. See for example, Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) and Carroll.Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).
104. Long, *Babylon, 227.*
105. See, for example, Jeffrey S. Adler, "Streetwalkers, Degraded Outcasts, and Good-For-Nothing Hussies: Women and the Dangerous Class in Antebellum St. Louis." *Journal of Social History* 2001, and Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers*.
106. See, for example, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), and Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers*.
107. These descriptions are found in *The Picayune*, 1857-1917.
108. "The City," *Picayune*, March 2, 1857.
109. Ibid, Oct. 13, 1893.
110. Ibid, Dec. 1, 1886.
111. Ibid, March 21, 1890.
112. Ibid, Feb. 4, 1897.
113. See, for example, Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918.*(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), and Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers*.
114. Long, *96.*
115. "City Hall Matters," *Picayune*, June 10, 1881.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. See, for example, Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood,* and Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers*.
120. Ibid.
121. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, and Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
122. Asbury, 364.
123. *Picayune,* May 29, 1870.
124. Asbury, 367.
125. See, for example, Long, *Babylon*, Rose, *Storyville*, Asbury, *The French Quarter.*
126. Long, 103.
127. Cordasco Pitkin, The White Slave Trade and the Immigrants: A Chapter in American Social History (Detroit: Blaine Ethridge, 1981.

CHAPTER THREE

NEW YORK CITY, PROSTITUTION, AND REFORMATION

Like New Orleans, post Civil War New York saw a large increase in the number of practicing prostitutes within the city. During the 1860s, one police report claimed that the number of local brothels had exceeded six hundred.[1] As a quickly growing and increasingly affluent American epicenter, New York's level of engagement in commercialized sex had come to rival its European counterparts. Historian Timothy J. Gilfoyle has stated that certain public areas and urban real estate, such as Broadway, the Battery, the Bowery, and Paradise Square, were becoming defined by their highly visible commercial sex trade.[2]

Although New York's first wave of antiprostitution reform began in 1832, with the Magdalen Society, the sex trade had flourished with little abatement until the 1870s.[3] The Society had attempted to purify American civic corruption by demonstrating the importance of the seventh commandment while exposing the extent of civic vice.[4] Because of its tendency to publicly denounce the affluent local gentlemen who frequented New York's best brothels, the society was soon disbanded because of public opposition and lack of funds.[5]

The second wave of moral reform began in New York City in the 1870s, as a part of the growing campaign to regulate prostitution.[6] These reformers proposed that prostitutes should be registered by the state and put under close surveillance by both doctors and the police.[7] This

regulation would also include mandatory medical examinations and compulsory hospitalization of those with venereal disease.[8] Regulationist reformers believed that although prostitution was a crime against the state, it was also a vice which was impossible to eradicate completely. They argued that it was a "necessary evil" that allowed for the inevitable dalliances of men outside of their marriages, and that it should, therefore, be as tightly controlled and regulated by the state as possible in order to preserve the "purity" of the home.[9]

Other reformers, who preferred to have prostitution outlawed altogether, fought these attempts to regulate the sex trade. Their mission was to completely reform the nation's morals through the avocation of "social purity."[10] The "antiregulationist," or "abolitionist," reform movement which was formed in the last decades of the nineteenth century contained coalitions of groups which espoused feminist, religious, and civil libertarian principles united to overcome the efforts of the regulationists.[11] Through their campaigns they attempted to swing public opinion in a new and more extreme direction. They hoped that the conception of prostitution would move from that of an acceptable and regulated "necessary evil" to that of a Social Evil which required vehement eradication. Their goals also included the censorship of pornography, reformation of prostitutes, sex education, prosecution of prostitutes' customers, and the establishment of women's right to refuse marital sex.[12]

This chapter analyzes mainstream mass media coverage of prostitution within a sample of seventeen news articles selected between 1880 and 1917. It seeks to explore the discursive

techniques employed by the New York daily press in its reportage of local prostitutes and prostitution in general, and intends to address the relationship between one of the most prominent New York daily papers and its most notorious local businesses. In particular, it seeks to answer the question of how *The New York Times* reflected societal notions concerning gender and morality from the mid nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century.

A qualitative textual analysis of the depiction of some of the major characters and events concerning the local sex trade, have been examined within the context of the changing social and moral concerns of the day. The newspaper used in this examination was *The New York Times,* which had one of the highest circulation rates and local readership in New York. This publication's index was scanned for articles which dealt directly with the sex trade within New York City. Under a search for "prostitution" in general, articles were selected from *The New York Times* that dealt with vice, female trafficking, The Board of Police Commissioners meetings, reformation of Tammany Hall corruption, The Raines Law, The Tenderloin District, The Bureau of Social Hygiene, prominent reformation groups and their leaders (such as Dr. Parkhurst), The Mann Act of 1910, and prostitution as a "social evil."

This search within *The New York Times* index yielded seventeen articles. Within this sample, several themes emerged in the New York press coverage of the sex trade which include the "white slave trafficking" narrative and its connection to urban prostitution, the linking of civic corruption in Tammany Hall to the proliferation of prostitution in New York, the growing concerns over the rate of immigration and its affect on the character of the city, and the attempt to move prostitution to the fringes of New York city. *The New York Times*, as one of the most prominent voices of the New York community, was instrumental in the recasting of prostitution as a social and moral evil, which was no longer a necessary component of civilized urban living.

The Times and the New York Elite

The New York Times was founded by Henry J. Raymond and George Jones in 1851, with the intention of creating a newspaper which "first of all gave the news, but which was not distorted by eccentricities of a personal editorial attitude or tainted by excessive attention to folly, immorality and crime."[13] Raymond characterized the paper as exhibiting "excellence in news service, avoidance of fantastic extremes in editorial opinion, and a general sobriety in manner."[14] Even with increasingly popular trends, such as the sensationalism and muckraking that later characterized yellow journalism in the 1880s and 1890s, *The Times* maintained its distinction as a conservative paper. *The Times* attempted to sustain an upper-class and stable readership by distancing itself from the "new journalism," emphasizing, instead, its adherence to professional reporting.[15] In 1891, Jones reiterated his assurance that *The Times* would "pay more attention to the worthy than to the unworthy side of human nature" and would not "strive to satisfy the desire to know what the sinful and frivolous are about."[16]

Under the later management of Adolf S. Ochs, *The Times'* staff continued the newspaper's conservative tradition and offered its services as a reliable nonpartisan newspaper as well as a "forum for the consideration of all questions of public importance."[17] *The Times'* resistance to the excesses of yellow journalism had made it a trusted and highly respected news source by the end of the century, and an influential platform for the public political discourse of the day.[18] *The Times'* reputation also paid off in sales. In one year, from 1898 to 1899, the

circulation rate rose from 25, 726 subscriptions to 76, 260, a gain with few parallels in American newspaper history.[19] Due to its successful format, *The Times* came to be regarded as the most eminent champion of conservatism in the American press, and a leading voice of the New York elite.[20]

As a leading voice and a proponent of the status-quo, *The New York Times* increasingly became a location where controversies were first introduced to a larger audience, and later debated and discussed, helping in the creation of a public discourse. These discourses played out a host of issues, including notions of respectability, changing ideas concerning women and the public sphere and the containment of vice, which bore significant and shifting meanings at the end of the nineteenth century. As an extension of society, newspapers such as *The Times* were, then, a site of cultural production that existed within the dominant political ideology.[21] This study of *The Times* is concerned with the discourses it helped to foster, and how they aided in the creation of representations of gender, class, and sexuality that functioned to naturalize and legitimize systemic social inequalities.[22]

Although *The Times* avoided the more sensational coverage of crime and vice by such popular New York newspapers as *The Herald, The Journal* and *The World*, it was a consistent forum for the public debate on the social reformation of vice in New York.[23] It covered the major events and players which shaped this debate, and offered opinion from public officials and ordinary citizens alike. In so doing, *The Times* held considerable influence among the social and

political elite.[24] Although its journalistic approach was meant to have a tone of detached and skeptical rationalism, its coverage of prostitution and the many issues related to it, belied its interest in preserving the larger capitalist system.[25] In fact, *The Times* helped to maintain the boundaries of acceptable political discourse in its organization and framing of controversial issues.[26] By the end of the century, vice reformation was *the* talk of New York, and an issue which demanded public attention.[27]

The White Slave Trafficking Controversy

According to the abolitionist reformers' perspective, legalized prostitution had encouraged a multitude of ancillary social problems. Among the most publicized of these threats was the growing concern over female white slave trafficking in Europe and the United States.[28] Historian Ruth Rosen has noted that "due to the constant demand for new and fresh young women for licensed houses, white slavers supposedly exported and imported young women in an international slave market."[29] This burgeoning hysteria over the imagined enormity of the white slave trade added considerable fervor to the abolitionist campaign.

The idea of white slavery, which became a hallmark of Progressive Era reform, had its origins in Britain in the latter half of the ninetieth century.[30] In 1885, British reformer William Stead published his infamous tracts on white slavery called "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" in *The Pall Mall Gazette*. In them he contended that destitute children were readily

purchased on the streets in London, held captive, and forced to work as prostitutes.[31] These investigative stories reached American audiences in the 1870s and 1880s, and similar exposes were conducted in American cities, purportedly revealing the ugly underbelly of American society.[32]

After the initial exposure of this social menace by the British press, stories of white slavery later proliferated in the U.S. mass media, and became the most pronounced between 1909 and 1910.[33] National and regional newspapers began to run stories which villainized the perpetrators of white slavery, idealized its female victims, and extolled the virtues of the reformers attempting to halt the trade.[34] As these sensational stories continued to appear in the commercial print media, they incited a "full-scale sexual and moral panic over the traffic in women."[35] This panic over the trafficking of women, and especially young innocent girls, then, was a key element in the abolitionist ammunition against the Social Evil of prostitution and its myriad forms.[36]

By the end of the century, American abolitionists had helped to create a national and international movement against prostitution, developing close ties with similar groups in Great Britain and Europe.[37] Gradually, the abolitionists' attempts to reform the nation's morals became part of the new Progressive Era's drive to abolish prostitution through the intervention of the State. The white trafficking narratives portrayed in the press helped to confirm the fear that moral degeneracy and turpitude had a strong hold on the American nation, and required stronger

measures to ensure its erasure.[38]

The image of the "fallen woman" was eventually usurped in popular culture by that of the "white slave," an epithet that moved the role of the prostitute from a "lost soul" to that of a woman involuntarily corrupted and contained by external forces.[39] But it is significant to note, that this anxiety over the enslavement of women into forced prostitution was "coded" as distinctly white in character. The distinction in the terminology of specifically "white slavery" presents an assumption that the plight of non-white forced prostitution was not even an issue. Within this new stereotyping of prostitutes as enslaved white women, reformers voiced their belief that the decision to enter into prostitution could never be a voluntary choice. The evil influences which forced women to prostitute themselves were thought to emanate from foreign sources, corrupting the fabric of American life. With European immigration on the rise, Americans feared their sociocultural influences on society, and grew more concerned with growing problems of prostitution in American cities.[40]

The New York Times article "An Infamous Traffic" from April 17, 1886, described the epidemic in international terms. Disreputable houses in New York, Chicago, Boston, and other cities, "have agents [in Quebec] who ingratiate themselves with young women and induce them to go to the States, where they are drawn into a life of infamy. Their trade has been carried on to an alarming extent, sometimes fifteen girls shipped in a week."[41] The article also claimed that the price of these girls vary according to their looks, and range from $320 to $8,200. Stories like

these, in which young and innocent girls were "disposed of for immoral purposes," heightened public curiosity and indignation over the control of vice.[42]

At its heart, the white slavery debate was deeply racist, and characterized by the xenophobic attitudes that were prevalent at the time.[43] Many Americans felt more comfortable attributing the traffic of women to foreign influences, and saw the situation as an effect of uncontrolled immigration.[44] Moreover, the emphasis of the white slave narratives on "whiteness" and European nationality made the plight of non-white prostitutes invisible to the international community.[45] The domestic white slave trade, as the main focus of local headlines, played into social fears of moral breakdown and urban corruption, grabbing the attention of the masses.

Most historians contend that the level of white trafficking proposed by the media exaggerated the extent of the problem, and was primarily a sensational attempt to sell more newspapers. But, as a representation of social disorder, these accounts were indicative of the fear which Progressive Era reformers held concerning notions of racial purity, changing gender roles, and shifting sexual mores.[46] Their measures hoped to ensure that the lower and less respectable classes were kept in check, under the guise of social "decency." Because of these, and other related social tensions, the extent of the corruption to be found in the city of New York became a prime focus of the Progressive agenda.

Fighting Tammany Hall

Anthony Comstock was a major forerunner in the New York reformation movement. In 1871, he had successfully lobbied for a federal antiobscenity law (the Comstock Law), and organized the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.[47] His crusade against vice lasted over a decade, making his name synonymous with sexual respectability in postbellum America.[48] The public vice campaigns of Comstock, Dr. Charles Pankhurst, and a host of antivice societies, actively sought to redefine the public limits of sexual behavior. As the parameters of public respectability became a source of debate and division among the citizens of New York, the emerging discourse became fodder for increasing newspaper revenue. *The New York Times* became one forum, among several media outlets, for this ongoing debate.

In 1892, Dr. Charles Parkhurst, a pastor of the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York, gave a sermon on the municipal protection of, and connections with, the vice market.[49] In an article in *The Times* which covered this event, Parkhurst is lauded for producing "another scathing arraignment of city officials."[50] Parkhurst alleged that "the city of New York was infected with crime and vice, and placed the responsibility for that condition of affairs directly at the doors of those city officials whose duty it is to see that good order and decency prevail."[51] This notion of a corrupt local municipal government which turned a blind eye to prostitution is similar to those attitudes that were espoused in the New Orleans press. The linking of civic corruption and rampant rates of prostitution had become an effective political weapon which

influenced voters and affected local legislation.[52]

The Times, in its tone and coverage of Progressive reformers and their agendas, seemed to clearly ally itself with the forces which hoped to remove all elements of Social Evil. The newspaper ran a host of articles that championed the efforts of social reformists while simultaneously holding the local government directly responsible. The corruption within New York's Tammany Hall had reached such an ignoble level that it could no longer go unacknowledged. One such piece in *The Times* contended:

> the city has for months now been held up to the scorn
> of the civilized world as the place where swindling, gambling,
> prostitution, and the worst forms of vice were permitted,
> not through negligence or inefficiency or a bad system,
> but for a price paid to the officers of the law.[53]

It was known that local police made guise of raiding brothels, in order that they might be paid for "protection," giving the offenders a discharged case or a lighter sentence.[54]

The press continued to use political language in its assault on Tammany Hall in the years that followed. Directly linking the corrupt government to the proliferation of vice, *The Times* stated, "Tammany, by its alliance with and contribution to the State machine, has had a powerful influence on Legislation at Albany, and that influence has been for sale."[55]

The Raines Law of 1898, a piece of local legislation which required "disorderly" cafes to

pay an $800 annual licensing fee, was held up by *The Times* as a prime example of how socially degenerate businesses could buy their way into the system and evade police intervention.[56] This piece of New York legislation is similar to the concert saloon licensing fees which had been instituted in New Orleans since 1890. In a *Times* article entitled "Vice Under the Raines Law," prostitution was characterized as being part of these disorderly businesses, and a prosperous sideline which helps them pay their licensing fee. "A great many of the saloon keepers established rooms in the rear of and over their saloons for the accommodation of this traffic."[57] *The Times* wrote that the Tammany government permits "these dens to exist and multiply."[58]

The political and moral crusade found in *The Times,* like that of *The New Orleans Daily-Picayune*, was part of a larger crusade against municipal corruption. Reformers often deployed publicity on Tammany's links with commercial vice in order to build political alliances across class, ethnic, religious, and gender lines.[59] As noted by Val Marie Johnson, "despite this range of adherents, and the framing of prostitution as a broad civic menace, antiprostitution crusades predominantly targeted working-class leisure venues and neighborhoods."[60] Because of this stratified focus on the location of vice, the war on commercial sex had become a highly politically charged weapon of the middle to upper-classes.

By the end of the nineteenth-century, the antiprostitution crusade was reaching its height. Social purity reformers in New York became alarmed by what they perceived as an enormous increase in prostitution, female trafficking, and venereal disease.[61] Reformers seem to have been

responding to the increasing visibility of prostitution, as well as the increasing amount of media coverage concerning these issues, linking them with locally specific political agendas. They called upon Congress to form a national crime commission to investigate the causes and extent of the Social Evil, but their request was ignored. Instead, the New York Committee of Fifteen was formed by local reformers in 1900---an independent vice committee to investigate prostitution in New York City.[62]

Immigrants, Vice, and Disease

The Committee of Fifteen's investigations into vice in 1900-1902, as well as the Committee of Fourteen's investigations in 1902-1932, attempted to bring the city's vice problems to light, including those which had been obscured by corrupt local authorities.[63] In 1901, they took Governor Odell to task in their proposal for new legislation which would hold tenement landlords responsible for renting to prostitutes. *The Times* began to editorialize that the "soul of the community" was deteriorating due to the presence of prostitution in tenement housing.[64]

In *The Times'* coverage of this incentive, the situation in the tenements was described as "deplorable" and "intolerable," and a Social Evil which must be "extirpated."[65] The Committee drew upon concern for the innocent children who happened to live in these houses, and their inability to be brought up "in an atmosphere free from the pollution of the most degrading forms

of moral evil."[66] In these article, vice seemed to proliferate these poverty-ridden dwellings, requiring local legislation to "protect children of tender years from close contact with depravity."[67]

Within this article, and others which were quite similar in tone and content, there was also a focus on the perceived threat of venereal disease in these conditions. Fear of social diseases had also become a prime tool in the war against Social Evil.[68] Prostitution presented a "pollution" which might infect the decent and healthy elements of society. *The Times* reported that "the statistics of diseases due to vice...are increasing at a rapid rate among children in the crowded sections of our city."[69] Following years of anxieties about the spread of disease due to prostitution, the Page Act was instituted in 1910, and provided for the compulsory physical examination of prostitutes for venereal disease. But, this act was short-lived, as it was labeled a partial form of state regulated vice and declared unconstitutional in 1911.[70]

Crowded tenement housing was often cited as a center for both disease and depravity in the less than affluent sections of New York. Tenement buildings housed many of the city's poor immigrants, people with few resources and little opportunity to choose better conditions. Reformers appealed to nativist prejudices by claiming that the acceptance of prostitution was equal to the acceptance of "polluted" European values, and a compromise to established American mores.[71] Some even began to use the scientific viewpoints of genetics and eugenics as proof of the decadent tendencies of foreign immigrants.[72]

The Times often carried articles that echoed nativist concerns. In its article "The Business of Vice," the owners and renters of "houses of ill fame" which were targeted are only those which resided in the poorer sections of the city.[73] The piece stated that "the human material for their traffic is found in the tenement houses of the more crowded districts, especially among the immigrants or descendants of immigrants and directly from foreign countries."[74] These articles made clear that a specific charge is being leveled at the lower classes of New York society, and it was their corruptive influence which is bringing moral standards down and encouraging the proliferation of vice.

This demarkation of vice along class lines was a much used tactic. Native-born prostitutes were more likely to work in brothels, while immigrant women tended to be streetwalkers without rented rooms.[75] Reformers knew that they would encounter less resistance to their agenda if they focused their attack on the lower-class streetwalkers and bagnios, leaving the more affluent brothels to carry on their trade. The campaigns against "the Social Evil in tenement houses" successfully consolidated an image of lower-class prostitution as an affront to the moral standards of respectable citizenry, and framed the repression of prostitution in the poorer districts as a central solution to complex municipal dramas.[76]

Why Girls Go Wrong

Notions of class prejudice permeated the public debate on prostitution. *The New York Times* printed a series of articles entitled "Why Girls Go Wrong" which debated the reasons women turned to prostitution. One affluent woman, who had previously served as a government employee, wrote a letter to the editor stating that the number of women who became prostitutes "without seduction and without a love for it, simply because they cannot make a living at an honest trade, I believe to be practically nil."[77] Another *Times* article quoted the director of the Chicago vice investigation. In his statement, he listed what he considered to be the most important contributing causes of immorality of girls:

> weakness of the mind and will, individual temperament,
> immoral associates, lack of religious or ethical training,
> injurious home influences, cramped living
> accommodations, lack of industrial efficiency, idleness,
> unwillingness to accept available employment, love of
> finery and pleasure, unwholesome amusement, inexperience,
> and ignorance of social temptations.[78]

Nowhere in this litany of moralistic posturing was there any reference to economic need and/or deprivation. As a Social Evil, prostitution was not characterized as a viable avenue for economic survival or as indictment of the limited range of opportunities that women in this era faced in

their daily struggle for economic and social well-being.[79] Low wages and less than ideal conditions for milliners, servants, chambermaids, and laundresses made prostitution a workable alternative.

In a rare rebuttal to this conception of the complete culpability of prostitutes, *The Times* printed a letter from a woman named "Patricia" who, very articulately, voiced sound economic reasons for turning to the trade. *The Times* was one of the few papers which allotted space for letters from readers whose opinions disagreed with the editorial stance of the newspaper.[80] In her dissension, Patricia cites economic necessity as the prevailing factor, stating, "if living wages were paid there would not be such great dividends on capital, but with the more equal distribution of the comforts of life, happiness would be increased more generally."[81] She described the lives of lower-class women as a "struggle for even the commonest necessities," and contended that if businessmen would begin to pay a decent living wage the level of prostitution in the city would naturally decrease, and "there would be less need of his going on vigilance committees in the city at large."[82]

Brothels in New York, like those of other major American cities including New Orleans, provided a large chunk of "illicit" revenue. These establishments gave landlords and lessees large profits, and provided the municipal tax collector, as well as the ward boss, with extra revenue.[83] Brothels also had highly visible cultural connections to the theater, concert saloons, and taverns. Over the years, the commercialization of the sex trade had helped to cement financial links between the city's growing "underground" economy, the real estate industry, and the municipal

government.[84]

As commercial sex grew more prominent and profitable, with little intervention from the state, private reform organizations stepped in to stem the tide of increasingly visible vice on the city's major thoroughfares. In this way, these societies attempted to enforce their own definition of sexual and moral codes for the entire public. The membership and administers of reformist societies included the most prominent citizens, and in their make-up and directives, reflected a new political consensus. Their concerns became front page news, and occasionally their reformist measures even usurped police power in their enforcement of regulation.[85] The Committees of Fourteen and Fifteen in New York were similar in characterization to the local vice committees formed in New Orleans by such groups as The Citizen's League and The Men's Business League. These societies successfully began, then, to "privatize" moral law enforcement.

On March 18, 1901, *The New York Times* ran an article on a committee of fifteen women which had been formed to assist the original Committee of Fifteen of the Chamber of Commerce in driving vice out of New York. A crowd of 2,000 listened to the speeches they delivered at Carnegie Hall, which later resulted in the adoption of new reformation resolutions.[86] In their appeal, these women admonished the officers of the law who "artificially fostered" the vice in the city which it was their sworn duty to repress. These reformers claimed that

> it is naturally repugnant to us, as women, to step into the arena of public discussion and to engage in the struggle

> against an evil the very existence of which is an affront to all our better instincts, nevertheless, alarmed at the moral peril of the young, we are constrained to break silence at this time and to make our voices heard in solemn protest and appeal.[87]

Although they claimed no right to engage in this public debate, their tone of privilege and authority was obvious in their remarks. This committee of women was clearly affluent. Many of these representative women were presidents of elite local social clubs, and spoke with the assurance that their opinions would be taken seriously. Their perspective was that of a clean division between themselves and any lower class and/or disrespectable element of society. Beyond moral reproach, these women took it upon themselves to dictate the parameters of social acceptability.

The stance taken by these women in this public forum was indicative of the new Progressive plan to eradicate vice. They contended that the root of the problem lay in the public's notion of prostitution as a "necessary evil" with "no adequate remedy."[88] They clearly defined the vice as a Social Evil, practiced by the "morally maimed," which posed a clear "menace to our homes."[89] The threat of white slavery was also invoked, and the committee intended to "rescue girls who have become entrapped in evil places and who cannot get away."[90] Once again, there was no admission of economic necessity, merely the labeling of a lower class of disadvantaged women as "criminals" whom "it is our duty to restrain for society's sake."[91]

Women of the upper classes were major players in the reform movements which targeted prostitution and sexual impropriety, especially that of the lower classes. Their social positions and affluence afforded them the time, education, and access to organizations which had been dominated previously by their male peers.[92] They were also uneasy about the emerging social changes which might threaten the established social order, and their place within it. As noted by Val Marie Johnson, "fears that the upper classes no longer determined codes of public conduct were central to this anxiety," as they were perceived as destabilizing existing class-stratified notions concerning public decorum.[93] Social codes, then, were the subverted message instilled within the reformist campaigns.

Articles in which this subversion of social codes is evident suggest that the extent of cultural authority that *The New York Times* wielded among the era's upper classes. As a result of these public outcries depicted in the media, formal legislation was later enacted, including a range of national and regional strategies to contain the alleged traffic of women.[94] Special vice units were also put into place by the FBI, and in 1910, Congress passed The Mann Act, which prohibited the transportation of unmarried women across state lines for "immoral" purposes.[95] During the same year The Mann Act was initiated, *The Times* attempted to distance itself from the white slavery controversy by promoting the idea that the white slave trade was largely a hoax meant to arouse the public, scandalize city officials, and increase sales.[96]

"Ordering" the City: Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Vice laws created during this era were evidence of a pronounced shift away from previous notions concerning sexuality, respectability and the public sphere. Regulation had moved from its conventional base of town statutes to the control of community initiatives and regulative bureaucracies.[97] The reformist societies concentrated their efforts on removing a disorderly sexual presence from the urban environment, and in so doing, redefined the limits of accepted sexuality through the symbolic "ordering" of public space.[98] As stated by historian Philip Hubbard, "vice laws thus made dominant moral codes clear tangible and entrenched, providing a fixed point in the attempt to construct boundaries between good and bad subjects."[99]

Still, the public outcry against vice continued, and in 1913, *The Times* continued to run articles which told its readers, "there is no question about how public sentiment should express itself toward the avaricious producers of foul scenes that are held up before the masses for gain."[100] The war on vice would not be over until prostitution was banished from public view. Due to the continuous attack on the brothel after 1890 by Charles Pankhurst and other reformers, prostitution during this time became more and more of a covert activity.[101] The Herrick Injunction and Abatement Act of 1914, a state law, penalized property owners who tolerated prostitution, pushing it further to the margins of society.[102] The major brothels were abandoned in favor of less visible apartments in furnished rooms, tenements, and hotels, leading the public to believe that their measures were effective rather than merely superficial.[103]

By 1915, all forms of prostitution were officially rendered illegal by the state legislature.[104] This state law was enacted with the primary purpose of keeping the U.S. military safe from the corruption and disease of urban prostitution. Within two weeks after the United States entered World War I, Secretary of War Newton Baker created the Commission on Training Camp Activities specifically to protect soldiers from prostitutes and venereal disease, treating illicit sex as not only subversive, but a national security threat.[105] The closing of many "red light districts" during the First World War was essentially an illusionary victory, as commercialized sex assumed new and subtler forms.[106]

In early 1916, *The Times* ran a lengthy article entitled "Vice Fighters Call New York Cleanest Big City."[107] The decreased visibility of prostitution on the streets of New York prompted this self-congradulatory piece, in which the Bureau of Social Hygiene claimed that the rate of prostitution had dropped by an amazing rate of seventy-percent since 1912. Headed by reformer John D. Rockefeller, the Bureau of Social Hygiene commissioned some of the most influential studies on prostitution and it effects.[108] The new police commissioner was also esteemed for his ability to clean up New York, and it was claimed that "today protection for vice cannot be bought."[109] New York was touted as a "Sunday school by comparison with the capitals of Europe" with reductions in "the waste and demoralization and the volume of disease connected to it."[110] Lastly, this article made a point of crediting the American public for demanding a decrease in civic vice, and in their active part in making change happen. "Public

sentiment is actively on the side of those who would repress vice. The American people, as a whole, have decided that prostitution is something that they do not want."[111]

This article sought to satisfy a host of municipal concerns for the New York residents. As a "new year's piece" the tone was one of social progress and the creation of a better and more prosperous new year. Ostensibly, everyone was united in the lowered rates of vice, and the police were now depicted as above corruption. Not only this, but the newspaper's readers were to be congratulated for helping to make all of this possible. This article contended that the elimination of urban vice was nearly complete, allowing respectable citizens to live their lives with increased confidence and ease. While this piece seems impossibly rosy, it also ignored the social realities which continued to pervade the city's urban fabric.

Prostitution and other forms of vice may have been lessened, or at least made less visible, but the problem remained that prostitution could never be entirely eradicated as the reformists hoped. Because of the limitations of the police's operational procedures their relationship to the commercial sex trade would always have to be one of compromise. Their level of acceptance of the trade was characterized by a complex and shifting pattern of negotiation.[112] Thus, their regulatory efforts focused on those urban areas where it appeared to be "out of place," pushing the trade to the margins of the city and into less affluent districts. As in New Orleans, this mapping of the city into respectable and disrespectable areas was a process whereby "disorderly" prostitution was excluded from the imagined cites of "orderly" sexuality.[113] Sexual

mapping, then, was a tactic by which dominant discourses, filtered through the government, media, and reformist societies, encouraged the enforcement of normative sexual practices and identities.

Conclusion

Articles in *The New York Times*, in the sample examined from 1880 to 1917, exhibit an evolution in the discourse surrounding prostitution, including its sources and effects on New York society at large. Like the reportage in the New Orleans sample, the coverage of prostitution and the local reformers' agendas was couched in language which ascribed specific moral undertones, and attempted to ascribe a newly defined moral order onto the citizens of New York. This chapter, in its examination of *The New York Times,* has explored the inherent anxieties of this constructed moral and social order, as found in the pages of one of the city's most prominent daily newspapers. This local newspaper reflected the civic need for this type of social construction as it enabled the public vilification of a highly visible and economically prominent sex trade, exposed the hidden corruption in local government, and furthered Progressive methods of reformation as necessary and beneficial.

Several themes emerged within the sample of the seventeen *New York Times* articles examined. Although *The Times* attempted to distance itself from the yellow journalism conducted by its rival newspapers, it was also occasionally caught up in some of the more sensational narratives of the era. The "white slave trafficking" controversy, although later downplayed by the editors, was given a fair amount of space---lending credence to the "exposure" of white slavery, and adding fuel to the fire of the moral panic it inspired. The issue of white slavery, as

depicted in *The Times*' articles, reveals the level of public uncertainty concerning a host of issues. As it was presented in the newspaper, this topic was linked to such diverse concerns as the age of consent, unchecked immigration, racial purity, and shifting gender roles and sexual mores.

New York City has had a long and varied history of anti-prostitution reformation strategies. *The Times* have given the reformist civic organizations' arguments, both regulationist and anti-regulationist, a place to attempt to sway the minds and opinions of its readers in the support of their cause. The newspaper's representation of reformist issues echo the community's clear concern over both the level of commercialized sex, and local municipal government corruption, which was depicted as a contributing factor. The depiction of a corrupt local city goverment as a negative influence on the rates of vice and prostitution was similar to that found in the New Orleans chapter.

Articles which focused on the vice districts in New York also appeared to conflate notions of immigration, poverty, vice, and disease. Lower-class neighborhoods and tenement housing were clearly singled out and vilified as "dens of depravity" where filth and disease ran rampant. The reformation movement strengthened these connections within the public's consciousness and used it as powerful ammunition in the anti-prostitution crusade. It is in these articles that the demarkation of vice along class lines was the most outstanding.

When these articles are considered in total, a picture emerged in which all of the issues surrounding prostitution merge into a single and unsavory entity, and this seemed to be the

desired effect. The vice laws which were enacted in New York, like those of New Orleans, relied quite heavily on these polarized images of the prostitute. In her depiction within the moral dramas that were played out in the pages of *The New York Times*, the prostitute had emerged as an evil outside force, invading and infecting the body politic.[114] Reformers were successful, then, in creating a strong compulsion to reinforce the social order, and to strengthen moral boundaries. In so doing, they were able to define who should remain within and without the respectable parameters of society.

Notes:

CHAPTER THREE
NEW YORK: *THE NEW YORK TIMES* AND REFORMATION

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CHAPTER FOUR

LONDON: British Babylon Revealed

London and Paris were in the view of American society in the nineteenth century, among the most corrupt and decadent cities in the world.[1] They were often held up in the American press as examples of the corruptive excesses of prostitution and vice.[2] Reformers who called for the eradication of prostitution in America over the regulation of the sex trade, which had begun in many of the larger Western European cities, decried the institution of "European values" at the expense of "American morals."[3] Theirs was a path that the U.S. needed to avoid, less it fall prey to the influence of lax European social mores and flagrantly promiscuous sexual habits.

A *New York Times* London correspondent provided firsthand evidence of the extent of the vice contained within the London underworld, where the "solution of the eternal social morality problem is the worst anywhere to be found."[4] As for the prostitutes themselves, the reporter contended they were so pervasive that "you jostle them everywhere; they look at you from every alley and darkened doorway," and estimated their numbers to be as many as 100,000 "who force upon the public eye...the whole melancholy drama of society's outcasts, from plump and joyous girlhood to the wasted wickedness of delirium tremens and starved old age."[5] Although this piece exaggerates the problem of prostitution in London, it does so based on the numbers suggested by published investigations of the day. Estimates on the number of

prostitutes had reached the phenomenal (and unlikely) number of 80,000 in 1839, according to an unsubstantiated investigation conducted and published by Dr. Michael Ryan and the London Rescue Society.[6]

In London during the nineteenth century, solicitation was not illegal, and the lure of the amount of money to be made brought many young women from the provinces into the city, where they could earn a living through prostitution.[7] Within the city, the hierarchy of prostitutes mirrored the class structures already established there.[8] There were the occasional high-end brothels, and prostitutes who aimed their solicitation toward the middle-class, but it seems that a substantial majority of them catered to a working-class clientele.[9] Owing to this, the number of independent prostitutes (who did not work for a larger establishment) reached its height in mid-century, allowing the women to work with little need for organization.[10] Streetwalkers were generally left to ply their trade without resistance by local authorities as long as they were not public nuisances.

The London police force had long realized the difficulty in trying to maintain order while taking into account the inevitabilities of a large city center with a working-class majority. Although they were given extensive powers to keep order, the police were keenly aware that prostitution, street selling, Sunday trading, noisy games, and rowdy pubs were features of big-city life which no amount of repression could remove.[11] Moreover, they knew that if their constables made enemies of the entire working-class by attacking their social and cultural

institutions, they would not be safe to walk the streets of London's poorer districts.[12] Because of this, the police commissioners often resisted public pressures to adopt more interventionist forms of moral policing, and arrested only the most flagrant violators of the public peace.

As prostitution grew in London, to some it gradually came to represent a highly visible symbol of the inherent problems of the new industrial era.[13] Like their American counterparts, the London public began to question the existence of so many "fallen women" in their midst. The Great Social Evil was a source of commentary among politicians, medical experts, religious activists, and newspaper editors alike.[14] Commentaries on prostitution began to create an expansive public discourse on this urban evil, and the measures needed to abate its progress. Since London was the center of nineteenth-century journalism and publishing, this debate was carried on through popular novels, political manifestos, letters to the editor of major newspapers, news stories, and in documented police reports.[15] Investigations into city matters also linked prostitution with overcrowding, workhouse children, factory conditions, women's employment, and other deplorable social conditions that were indicative of the city's urban, and increasingly industrial, character.[16]

The press coverage of prostitution in London helped to influence the formation of specific social and moral constructions in London society, and was also instrumental in articulating the ways in which respectability, sexuality, and appropriate behavior for men and women were undergoing crucial changes in the mid to late nineteenth century.[17] During this time,

protests ensued which began to readdress the role of commercial sex within the city center, and attempted to contain its occupational and geographic mobility.[18] More stringent public sanctions against unrespectable social behavior affected prostitutes, and women in general who walked the London streets alone. For the women who relied upon prostitution as a means of making a living, the new legislation which targeted them effectively undermined their social and economic autonomy, rendering them social outcasts.[19]

This chapter analyzes mainstream mass media coverage of prostitution within a sample of twenty-one news articles selected between 1880 and 1917. It seeks to explore the discursive techniques employed by the London daily press in its reportage of local prostitutes and prostitution in general, and intends to address the relationship between the most prominent London daily paper and some of the most notorious women of London. In particular, it seeks to answer the question of how *The London Times* reflected societal notions concerning gender and morality from the mid nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century.

A qualitative textual analysis of the depiction of some of the major characters and events concerning the local sex trade has been examined within the context of the changing social and moral concerns of the day. The newspaper used in this examination was *The London Times*, which had one of the highest circulation rates and local readership in London. This publication's index was scanned for articles which dealt directly with the sex trade within the city of London. Under a search for "prostitution" in general, articles were selected from *The London Times* that contained references to vice, female trafficking, reformation, The Contagious Diseases Acts, The National Vigilance Association, "The Case of Miss Cass," The Maiden Tribute, and prostitution as a "social evil." This list included twenty-one entries in total. And while these examples are not the only articles related to the subject of prostitution in these respective cities, they constitute a very well-rounded characterization of this pivotal era.

Within this sample, several themes emerged in the London press coverage of the sex trade which include the "white slave trafficking" narrative and its connection to urban prostitution, the linking of disease and moral decay to the proliferation of prostitution, growing concerns over the activities of women in public and its affect on the character of the city, and the attempt to move prostitution to the fringes of London proper. *The London Times*, as one of the most prominent voices of the London community, likely was instrumental in the recasting of prostitution as a social and moral evil, which was no longer a necessary component of civilized urban living.

London and *The London Times*

The London Times, as a traditional and well-respected mouthpiece of the city's elite, testifies to a widespread and earnest debate concerning prostitution and the issues which surrounded it.[20] According to Joel H. Weiner, the serious late Victorian reader's list of newspapers was limited to less than a dozen influential dailies whose image held the confidence of "right-thinking people."[21] At the head of this list was the venerable *London Times*, watched by the great everywhere in the world, and read at home by the solid governing class.[22] As a highly influential journal, *The Times* was an important component of the public discourse concerning changing social and sexual mores.

As noted by historian Trevor Fisher, the public debate over female prostitution and its effects was conducted in *The London Times* with a "high-minded seriousness and almost obsessive concern with detail characteristic of nineteenth-century social investigation."[23] The

anxieties about public life which were found in these debates reflected a deep belief that the roots of social stability lay in individual and public morality.[24] As in America, public agitation, in turn, was also linked to new social tensions concerning the position of women, the impact of immigration, and the effects of rapid urban and industrial growth.[25]

The London Times helped to produce a distinct discourse concerning female prostitution at the turn of the twentieth century that was characterized by moralism, scientific investigation, and overt politics.[26] Examination of the press coverage surrounding the debate over prostitution and its many associations offers a unique glimpse into the climate of Britain during this era. It was during this time that British society debated whether it should tolerate prostitution as an inevitable phenomenon or suppress it as an intolerable evil.[27]

The Contagious Diseases Prevention Act

By the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian medical authorities began to associate growing rates of venereal disease with the increases in prostitution.[28] These infectious diseases were categorized as having entered society through the "impure" sexual intercourse associated with prostitution.[29] Judith Walkowitz states, "as the carrier of physical and moral pollution, the prostitute was the subject of considerable public inquiry as well as the object of individual preoccupation for respectable Victorians."[30] In 1864, the public health lobby outside of Parliament secured legislation and regulation of prostitution along Continental lines. In a direct

attempt to stem the public threat of venereal disease, especially upon the military, The Contagious Diseases Prevention (C.D.P.) Act was passed.[31] This Act allowed for the compulsory examination and cure of the "public women" who propagated venereal disease.[32] Of specific concern was curbing the rate of syphilis, which was perceived as a serious health hazard for the British population, as well as a growing military expense.[33]

The London Times ran an article March of 1870, in which reformists voiced their support of the Contagious Diseases Prevention Act, claiming that the rate of infection had reached unparalleled numbers.[34] *The Times* story vigorously supported the Act, reporting that

> a thousand voices have for the past six months that in endevouring to check certain diseases we are impiously striving to take the rod out of the hand of God, and that in relieving the most wretched and degraded class of sufferers we are crushing the seeds of self respect which might otherwise spring up and blossom into fairer and holier nature.[35]

As arguments such as these were vehemently attacked by those who wanted to see the Act repealed, it became clear that the C.D.P. Act had become a matter of public controversy.

In a letter to the editor of *The Times*, one Berkeley Hill admonished "the wicked indifference of these women to their liability to propagate a cruel disease, and of the obstinacy of the more hardened among them in returning again and again to their shameful trade."[36] Reformers praised the supervision and inspection of prostitutes as a defense of public health, public

decency, and public order.[37] Although this Act was ostensibly passed as sanitary measure to control the spread of venereal disease, its local administration extended beyond this specific concern.[38] Judith Walkowitz contends that "The Act was part of institutional and legal efforts to contain the occupational and geographic mobility of the casual laboring poor, to clarify the relationship between the unrespectable and respectable poor, and specifically to force prostitutes to accept their status as public women."[39]

The hospitals which conducted the examinations of prostitutes imposed a social discipline and therapeutic regime on female venereal patients that incorporated the class and sex prejudices of the dominant Victorian culture.[40] But, The Contagious Diseases Act met with resistance from English Feminists who saw the legislation as unnecessarily targeting women over men as carriers, as well as an illustration of the growing desire of government regulation of private life.[41] Led by the activist Judith Butler, the Feminists allied with middle-class nonconformists and radical workingmen and opposed the regulation of prostitution, securing the repeal of the Act in 1886.[42] Through this campaign, respectable women had included themselves in the public discussion of sexuality, and had altered its course. But, this was not the only front on which the battle with prostitution was to be fought. During the next two decades the controversy over "white slave trafficking" also kept reformist measures in the spotlight.

White Slave Trafficking and "The Maiden Tribute"

During the 1870s and 1880s, the fact that officials and reformers were able to uncover a small traffic in women between Britain and Belgium made for a sensational news story which helped to fan the reformist fire. Numerous articles were published concerning this newly discovered public threat, helping to create an atmosphere of cultural paranoia which was to have far-reaching effects. As noted in the previous chapter on New York, "white slave traffic" hysteria even reached some of the major American cities. By 1884, *The London Times* stated that "complaints have been rife for years with regard to the enticing of English girls to Belgium for immoral purposes," and asking for further control through legislative measures.[43] The legislation which later resulted signaled a reevaluation of the way in which prostitution had been regarded in London as well as many other large European metropolises.

In 1885, W.H. Stead ran his sensational article "The Maiden Tribute in Modern Babylon" in the *Pall Mall Gazette* which became a series focusing on this illicit sexual trafficking.[44] Grossly exaggerating the age and purity of the girls "forced" into prostitution, this article was one of the most successful pieces of yellow journalism published in Britain in the nineteenth century.[45] Stead's article led to mass public demonstrations and to the onset of a large-scale social purity movement.[46] The effect of "The Maiden Tribute" was so great that even the more conservative *Times* was compelled to cover issues surrounding white slave trafficking and the reformers who "uncovered" it.

As stated by historian Judith Walkowitz, the white slave narrative, as produced within the most prominent media outlets of its time, "provoked contradictions that, according to Michel Foucault, are at the heart of bourgeois sexuality."[47] These articles helped to amplify the fear of sexual danger for women and and to mobilize the populace against it. In its distortion of the threat of prostitution to not only young girls, but also to British society at large, this narrative helped to coalesce various elements of the reformation movement, while simultaneously revealing and defining the sexual "underworld" of London.[48]

In 1885, as a direct result of the public outcry, The Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed. This Act, although similar to New York's Mann Act of 1910, predated it by twenty-five years, raising the age of consent for young girls from thirteen to sixteen years of age.[49] The National Vigilance Association was also established in the same year, seeking to fight vice and sexual immorality in all its forms. *The London Times* covered The National Vigilance Association's meetings with regularity between 1886 and 1904.[50] The tone of the coverage of *The Times* concerning these issues echoes the sense of public outrage and reformist vehemence that had come to define the anti-trafficking dialogue in general.

In numerous articles *The Times* seems to represent the conscience of the masses, who have, unknowingly, allowed for this immoral activity to exist and flourish in their midst.[51] These articles often refer to the imagined "horrible cruelties" which have been enacted upon these young women as they are "procured, persuaded, or induced...for the purposes of debauchery."[52] *The*

Times quoted the concerns of leading reformists like Mrs. H. Fawcett who implored the British government that "it was time something should be done to prevent girls being shipped from country to country like cattle" after being led astray by "false advertisements for companions or governesses."[53]

The white slavery issue, as well as inspiring public legislation, was also effective as a means to impose a homogenous unity on the public. Readers of the white slave narratives within the more popular dailies were addressed as a unified general public, a mass moral majority which, ostensibly, had the same interests at heart.[54] Readers were addressed as being interested in the abatement of this moral outrage, and encouraged to support the enactment of legislative measures. In this way, the public's identity was one in which class, age, and ethnicity were submerged, homogenizing the audience into a single public unit.[55] Along with the creation of a single, moral, public entity, came the identification of the pimp and prostitute as elements existing outside of these parameters, and outside the barriers of social respectability. In the elevation of sexual narratives, such as this one, to the level of sexual scandal, a social drama was created within the press' coverage which created social divisions and forced people to take sides.[56] You were either "in" or "out" of respectable society, with little or no room for negotiation.

The National Vigilance Association, in its attempt to stem the tide of slave trafficking in most of Western Europe, met with the intention of dealing "with a very flagrant evil which existed in all the principal States of Europe" by forming a central council with two

representatives of each nation and an executive committee sitting in London.[57] In 1899, the International Conference on the White Slave Traffic met, and *The Times* reported that Lord Salisbury assured the association that the "object of the conference has the entire sympathy of her majesty's government."[58] It is evident in these articles that the reformists had become highly successful in their efforts to engage parliamentary lobbying and in achieving the attention and support of national press coverage. The Association was a key component of moral reform and an entity which helped to establish ever clearer distinctions between acceptable and disorderly forms of public activity.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885: An Act to Make Further Provision for the Protection of Women and Girls, the Suppression of Brothels, and Other Purposes.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 contained several measures which provided for easy summary proceedings against brothel keepers, especially in their allowance for easier police intervention into the private lives of poor women and children.[59] This legislation was instituted to suppress street solicitation and to close the more visible brothels, a move away from earlier measures in which prostitution would have been tolerated in carefully demarcated areas of the city. Created and instituted as a direct result of pressure from social-purity groups, this Act, along with the Contagious Diseases Acts, was part of the new public sanctions that stigmatized prostitutes and contributed to their social isolation.[60]

The local application of reformation legislation met with a mixed response from the London public. The year before The Criminal Amendment Act was passed, *The London Times* published letters to the editor which represented both sides of the debate on the effectiveness of its provisions. One outspoken critic of the Act, Mr. Auberon Herbert, wrote *The London Times* to "protest most strongly against this frightful office of 'inspectors of morality' that we are about to confer upon the police, by making solicitation an offense."[61] He added that "in doing it you give power to the police not only over the women that make up the special sisterhood in question...but also over another large class who are outside it."[62]

The social debate over the regulation of prostitution had always been one which was permeated with class prejudices. Mr. Herbert's concerns were at the heart of the problem with these sorts of legislative measures. To arrest women for their presence on certain streets at certain hours, or for residing in "disorderly" houses, did not take into account those women who may be there purely because of their economic inability to be elsewhere, in a more respectable locale. In essence, these measures were an attempt to make the lower classes adhere to a more rigid standard of social and sexual respectability, or face the penalties of the magistrate's court rulings (twenty pounds fine or three months imprisonment, with or without hard labor).[63]

As in New York and elsewhere, London's poorer tenement housing was a main focus for the institution of these provisions. The Criminal Amendment Act stated:

> any person who keeps or manages or acts or assists in the management

of a brothel, or being a tenant, lessee, ot occupier of any premises, knowingly permits such premises or any part thereof to be used as a brothel or for the purposes of habitual prostitution shall be liable.[64]

A *Times* article which focused on a crime in a Spitalfields lodging-house exemplified this view of the corruption to be found within lower-class housing areas. The house referred to in this piece is lumped in with every other lodging-house as possessing a similar character. "They are the haunt of the burglar, the home of the pickpocket, and the hotbed of prostitution. And the sooner these lodging-houses are put down the better."[65] The only problem, according to this report, was that "they could only be touched by one section of The Criminal Law Amendment Act" even though these houses are "as unwholesome and unhealthy, as well as dangerous to the community as can well be."[66]

The Act itself was largely aimed at the protection of under-aged girls from being forced into the commercial sex trade, but it also incorporated new provisions concerning prostitution in general. Its terms were arbitrary and vague in its definition of public solicitation. It stated that any woman on the street who speaks to a man and "loiters and importunes" is guilty of offense.[67] But, reformers championed the adoption of the Act as a major leap forward in the suppression of vice. *The Times* printed many letters from supporters who wholeheartedly backed the legislation.[68] They ventured to insist that this Act "will have the support of all right-thinking men and women," especially "to check the grave scandal in the streets at the West End at night."[69]

The source of contention within the enforcement of The Criminal Law Amendment Act lay in reconciling its attempt to protect young women, and its simultaneous ability to have a controlling impact on the lives of working-class girls and women.[70] Often viewed as a major stage of the humanization of sexual relations and in the development of a single standard of morality, the Act also created an extension of social regulation on sexual behavior.[71] Behind the guise of protection for young girls, the Act was instrumental in the control and containment of "disorderly" women, and in promoting the normative ideal of the nuclear family. In the introductory speech by Sir Richard Cross to the Parliament, in which the arguments for the Act were first heard, Cross stated its relevance to the British public quite clearly. He remarked that "there is nothing more sacred to the English people, and there is nothing which they are so determined to maintain, as the purity of their own households."[72] Clearly, the legislation was seen as a much needed remedy for encroaching urban vice. It was thought that this Act would serve to preserve conventional family life, and maintain traditional moral standards.

The Case of Miss Cass: A Provincial Girl in Piccadilly

Another news story which likely caught the attention of Victorian readers was the much discussed "Case of Miss Cass." This story became another urban narrative which illustrated the perceived dangers encountered by women who attempted to walk the London streets alone at night, as it was thought no respectable woman of the middle to upper-classes would do. In June

of 1887, Miss Elizabeth Cass was mistaken for a prostitute and arrested by a policeman on Regent Street. As a provincial woman, Cass was unaware that her presence on the street after 9:30 in the evening held her in suspicion, and she and her employer had to later prove her innocence in court.[73] The Cass case was significant because it provoked a new debate on the contested space of London's West End, an area notorious for its high visibility of prostitution, as well as being a public place where women and men of different classes mixed.[74]

The Times reported at length on the arrest of Miss Cass "for the purpose of calling attention to a definite matter of urgent police importance" that required a formal inquiry, due to the deep public interest that it had incurred "among all classes of the community."[75] Cass herself was described as a woman of "pious and moral" character who was "seized by a policeman and dragged to Tottenham Court Road police station, and entered into the book as a common prostitute...a terrible and almost irremediable injury."[76] It was suggested in this article that Cass' reputation has been ruined completely by this false arrest, and that other women should be wary of a similar fate. It seems that a woman's mere presence in this area at night, whether or not she was engaged in solicitation, cast her as a "public woman" and permanently tarnished her reputation.

More importantly, the Cass case was illustrative of the ordering of public space (and time) into the orderly/disorderly paradigm. The West End had clearly been recognized as a disorderly part of the city, where vice was flagrant and rampant. Therefore it was incumbent

upon any woman in this area to be aware of this stigmatization in order to avoid any assaults on her personal character and/or incurring a criminal record. The magistrate was quoted in *The Times* as warning, "If you are an honest girl, as you say you are, don't walk in Regent Street at nights after 9:30, for if you do, next time you are caught here you will be sent to prison or fined."[77]

Subsequent letters to the editor of *The London Times* played out the moral indignation and public concern for not only the extent of prostitution in the area, but also of the inability of the local police force to effectively suppress it. Letters demanded "action to publicly vindicate the character of a virtuous woman" and assurance of "the due administration of justice at our police courts."[78] Reformers used the case as yet another focal point of urban vice in their attempt to create a single moral majority out of a heterogeneous public, and called for increased crack downs on the city's streetwalkers. Likewise, feminists used the case to call upon the inability of respectable women to walk along the streets unchaperoned, and the limitations this placed on their public movements. The issues raised in these letters pointed to changing notions of respectability, women in the public sphere, and the "ordering" of London society.

The Cass case also highlighted the ambiguous nature of gender encounters in London's West End due to the extent of the infiltration of the commercial sex trade. With the more extensive and pervasive measures to control the sex trade in this area, men were also targets of arrest. *The London Times* reported on October 7, 1895, that an Oxford Professor of Anatomy, Edwin Ray Lankester, "was charged with having been disorderly" and "in the company of six or

seven women of loose character."[78] Although Lankester pleaded his innocence, he was found guilty of obstruction of justice by the magistrate. On October 14, he wrote a long letter to *The Times* calling for a departmental inquiry into police corruption. Lankester asked "whether it is tolerable that a man perfectly well known, talking to another person in the street... should be ordered to move on, and on his remonstrating... he should be liable to be seized and treated as the vilest criminal?"[79] A fair question, and one which had been asked in the past primarily by the women who were the most common victims of such arbitrary arrests.[80]

It seems that the new extensions of social regulations of sexual behavior had profound impacts on both sexes. The last decades of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth centuries witnessed a major attempt at moral restructuring which had its effects both in legislation and in the tone of public life.[81] The Criminal Amendment Act initiated in 1885 was put into place because it played upon the most prominent public anxieties. As posited by the British historian Jeffrey Weeks, 1885 was an *annus mirabilis* of sexual politics, and the year of the expansion of the electorate, fears of national decline following the defeat of General Gordon, and anxieties about the future of Ireland, all within the context of a socialist revival and feminist agitation.[82] The reformation movement was able to tap into these social tensions, making moral purity a metaphor for a stable society.

The Onset of World War I and the Prostitute as Outcast

As in New Orleans and New York, the onset of World War I rekindled the controversy in London over prostitution by linking it to concerns of increased rates of venereal disease. The newly created 1913 Royal Commission into Venereal Disease, the parallel debates about national degeneracy, and the First World War's necessity for the mass education of troops in the dangers of commercial sex, continued the public debate on prostitution.[83] Purity, familialism, and public decency remained as the social norms which the apparatus of formal moral regulation sought to uphold, closing the gap between the public and private spheres.[84] The First War brought new concerns to this debate, including the dislocations of family life and the fear of increased promiscuity. Several women's organizations, in an effort at control and regulation of acceptable public behavior, initiated patrols to keep watch for loose behavior in open spaces near military camps.

Like the civic groups founded in New Orleans and New York, The London Public Morality Council was founded with the intention of maintaining public moral order. Its efforts were aimed at salacious conduct which was an offense against the law "when committed within the view of the public."[85] Among its many achievements, the Council was instrumental in the closing of a number of music-hall promenades, and in driving prostitutes form many of their customary haunts on licensed premises.[86] Efforts like these, of public control, pointed to perceived necessity of containing and limiting both the occupational and geographical mobility of

prostitutes for the larger benefit of the community.

By the last decade of the Victorian Era, prostitution had not been criminalized per se, but both the law and police behavior had become so repressive that brothels could only operate under the utmost secrecy, and with large bribes to local officials.[87] Streetwalking had become a high-risk activity for both prostitutes and their clients. Between 1890 and 1914, the systematic repression of lodging-house brothels was carried out in almost every major city in Great Britain, as a response to local pressure by social-purity groups.[88] Thus, the demand for commercial sex was merely driven underground, and out of the public eye.

More stringent public sanctions against disrespectable social behavior had an enormous impact on public prostitutes, and working-class culture in general. As a result, the lower strata of the working-class were increasingly enclosed within the bounds of respectable behavior and standards of living, while the poverty and prostitution that persisted were made more invisible, isolated, and socially outcast.[89] These developments, as suggested by Judith Walkowitz, may have further contributed to a privatized, home-centered culture and stimulated lower-class antagonism toward women who supported themselves as "public women."[90]

Public regulation of prostitution actively encouraged the social isolation of prostitutes. The legislation which had been put in to place, thanks to the efforts of social-purity reformists, helped to more sharply define the categories of acceptable social and sexual behavior. Public shaming was one of the principal functions of police surveillance and legal action.[91] Social

exposure and labeling of women as "immoral" within their respective communities acted to successfully Other them---rendering them as social outcasts. The stigmatization of prostitution, then, forced sex workers into the margins of society, out of sight, and out of the parameters of the dominant and respectable class structure.[92]

Conclusion

Articles in *The London Times*, in the sample examined from 1880 to 1917, illustrate the manner in which the discourse surrounding prostitution, came to be publicly discussed and debated within the daily press. Like the reportage in the New Orleans and New York samples, the coverage of prostitution and the local reformers' agendas was couched in language which ascribed specific moral undertones, and in so doing, reflected the evolution of moral order in the London community. This chapter, in its examination of *The London Times,* has explored the inherent anxieties of this constructed moral and social order, as found in the pages of one of the city's most prominent daily newspapers. This local newspaper reflected the civic need for this type of social construction as it enabled the public vilification of a highly visible sex trade, and helped in the preservation of traditional notions of class and respectability. As in New Orleans and New York City, press coverage of reformation efforts depicted them as timely, necessary, and beneficial.

Several themes emerged within the sample of the twenty-one *London Times* articles examined. *The Times*' press coverage of the commercial sex trade included the linking of disease and moral decay to the proliferation of prostitution, the "white slave trafficking" narrative and its connection to urban prostitution, growing concerns over the activities of women in public and its

affect on the character of the city, and the attempt to move prostitution to the fringes of London proper.

Unlike in America, the regulation and examination of prostitutes under public health laws had a much longer history. The Contagious Diseases Act, which was revised and passed in different forms in 1864, 1866, and 1869, was the first legislative effort in Britain to link prostitution to notions of "public health." The medical examinations they entailed were an attempt to regulate prostitution by the state, making private sexual relations a matter of public interest.[93] This concern later resurfaced with the onset of World War I, and also became of great significance to the American government as well. Regulation lobbyists found that their most productive line of advance was to play on fears in government and military circles about the impact of venereal disease on the fighting efficiency of the army and navy.[94] Prostitutes were depicted as a social contaminant which required state intervention and constant surveillance to ensure that they were being kept in check.

Another theme in this chapter was the "white slave trafficking" controversy. Although initially published in *The Pall Mall Gazette,* this sexual narrative was also adopted and discussed in the pages of *The London Times*. Like the controversy which it inspired in the New York press, the "white slave trafficking" narrative clouded the debate over the regulation of prostitution with other, negative associations. These included notions of unchecked immigration, the corruptive influences of urbanization, and the depiction of sex workers as unwilling victims of a vicious

"underworld" community. This exaggerated sexual narrative was successful in building a mass reading public that was interested in the exposition of the metropolitan corruption, and in creating a sense of unified public morality against the evils of prostitution.[95]

The public controversy which surrounded "The Case of Miss Cass" in *The London Times* press coverage was also a keen reflection of the ambiguous nature of gender encounters in urban London. And although the reformers used this case to illustrate the extent of the proliferation of prostitution in the West-End, Feminists were also able to use Elizabeth Cass as an example of the delimiting effects of certain legislation. Clearly, London's public spaces had become contested terrain, and the activities (especially those of women) carried on there had taken on significant social ramifications. Women's public activities had fallen under the scrutiny of the local police, civic morality-minded organizations, and political officials.

The Contagious Diseases Acts, "white slave trafficking" legislation, and The Case of Miss Cass all point to the inability of the London authorities to regulate prostitution effectively. Public legislation, in its desire to link prostitution to a host of other societal ills, had made effective legislation problematic. The articles examined in this sample from *The London Times* point to this sense of a negotiated attempt to define and curtail the commercial sex trade. The issues surrounding it were part of a larger public discourse concerning the challenges of modern urban living and the ways in which the private had become increasingly political.

Notes:

CHAPTER FOUR
LONDON: BRITISH BABYLON REVEALED

1. Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America*, 1900-1918, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 11.
2. See chapters on "The Maiden Tribute" in Rosen and in
Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.,1992).
3. Ibid.
4. "London Gossip," *The NY Times*, Nov. 14, 1887.
5. Ibid.
6. Trevor Fisher, *Prostitution and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2.
7. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 22.
8. Ibid, 23.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, 24.
11. Stephen Inwood, *A History of London* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc.,1998).
12. Ibid.
13. Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State.* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 32.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. See Carroll Smith-Rosenburg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1985).
18. Walkowitz*, Prostitution and Victorian Society*.
19. Ibid, see Rosen's chapter "The Making of an Outcast."
20. Joel H. Weiner, *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914* (London: Greenwood Press, 1988.)
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Fisher, vii.
24. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*. (London: Longman, 1981.)
25. Ibid.
26. Fisher, xii.
27. Ibid.
28. Judith Walkowitz ,*City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22.
29. Fisher, 80.
30. Walkowitz, *City*, 22.
31. Fisher, 81.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.

34. “The Contagious Diseases Act,” *The London Times*, March 26, 1870.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid, March 23, 1870.
37. Walkowitz, *City*, 23.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid, 65.
41. Barbara Caine, “Feminism in London, Circa 1850-1914,” *Journal of Urban History* 2001 27 (6):765.
42. Walkowitz, *City*, 90.
43. (Unknown) *The London Times,* Jan. 15, 1884.
44. Walkowitz*, Prostitution*, 246.
45. Ibid.
46. Caine, 765.
47. Walkowitz, *City*, 95.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. “The National Vigilance Association,” *The London Times*, July 14, 1898, June 22, 1899, Sept. 28, 1901, June 13, 1903, etc.
51. Ibid.
52. “National Vigilance Association,” *The London Times*, Nov. 22, 1902.
53. Ibid.
54. Walkowitz, *City,* 85.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. “National Vigilance Association Congress,”*The London Times*, June 22, 1899.
58. Ibid.
59. Walkowitz, *Prostitution,* 211.
60. Ibid.
61. “Hypocrisy Below, Respectability Above,” *The London Times*, April 15, 1884.
62. Ibid.
63. Fisher, 136.
64. Ibid.
65. “In the Courts,” *The London Times*, Oct. 3, 1888.
66. Ibid.
67. “Hypocrisy Below, Respectability Above,” *The London Times*, April 15, 1884.
68. See for example*:* “Hypocrisy Below, Respectability Above,” *The London Times*, April 15, 1884, “The Criminal Law Amendment Bill,” *The London Times,* April 18, 1884, and “In the Courts,” *The London Times*, Oct. 3, 1888.
69. “The Criminal Law Amendment Bill,” *The London Times*, April 18, 1884.
70. Weeks, 87.
71. Ibid, 88.
72. Walkowitz, *City*, 103.
73. Ibid, 128.
74. Ibid.
75. “The Arrest of Miss Cass,”*The London Times*, July 6, 1887.
76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.
78. (Un known) *The London Times*, Oct. 7, 1895.
79. "Letter to the Editor," *The London Times*, Oct. 14, 1895.
80. Walkowitz, *City*, 24.
81. Weeks, 86.
82. Ibid, 87.
83. Fisher, xi.
84. Weeks, 214.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid, 215.
87. Fisher, xi.
88. Walkowitz, *Prostitution*, 211.
89. Ibid, 213.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid, see Rosen's chapter "The Making of an Outcast."
92. Ibid.
93. Walkowitz, *City*, 97.
94. Fisher, x.
95. Walkowitz, *City*, 97.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century female prostitution and its regulation was intimately bound up with notions of gender, race, class, and culture, as it was defined for the late Victorian Era. Its history, as portrayed in the pages of some of the most respected news journals of the day (*The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, *The New York Times* and *The London Times*), attests to its position as a key subject in both the American and British reform movements. In the legislation that was enacted to control the commercial sex trade, there can be seen a larger effort to reform, modernize, sanitize, contain, and control the sexuality of women, creating boundaries for the pubic sphere.

The public debates concerning prostitution were central to the definition and maintenance of "order" in increasingly industrial and urban societies. Regulatory bureaucracies and community initiatives worked to both repudiate and remove a disorderly sexual presence from the urban environment, defining the limits of acceptable sexuality through the symbolic ordering of space.[1] Public space had become a contested terrain, and one which would fall under the new regulatory practices, creating clear demarcations between the respectable and the unacceptable. Reformation campaigns, in their designation to hide the presence of socially-defined immoral and unhealthy women in the urban landscape, acted to push prostitution into a distinct and separate "underworld" of society.

It is this conceptual mapping of the urban landscape, both physically and conceptually, that makes the theoretical underpinnings of Michel Foucault's perspectives on the history of sexuality seem both relevant and illuminating. Foucault's theories on sexuality are devoted to the history of the social construction of sexuality in Western societies. In particular, his analyses are

concerned with the history of the manner in which sexuality has been studied, policed, regulated and controlled, and how this process illuminates certain fields of power/knowledge.[2] Foucault's work essentially views the construction of sexuality as a history of specifically constructed discourses designed to meet specific needs. He contends that these discourses did not "naturally" evolve, but are part of the complex web of interactions that are to be found on every societal level.

Foucault challenged many of the widely accepted notions that Western societies have generated concerning not only the history of sexuality itself, but also the ways in which sexuality and its governance became a matter of public debate. Through this discourse, Foucault contended that sexuality was defined, delineated, and ultimately, institutionalized.[3] Foucault based his theories on sexuality on a complete reversal of previously accepted notions of Victorian sexuality. Commonly seen as an era of prudishness and reservation in terms of the level of public engagement in an open sexual discourse, Foucault offered that this era was the most crucial in the establishment of our current notions about sexuality. Within this era's ever-expansive and pervasive obsession with sexuality and its correlation to concepts of identity and power, laws and attitudes were created that still remain with us today.[4]

This study has examined a few particulars of the practice of prostitution between 1880 and 1917, drawing from the observational lens of Foucauldian theory. In each of the three cities analyzed, the selected newspapers reflected societal notions concerning sexuality, morality, and the evolution of a distinct stance regarding female prostitutes and their perceived place (or lack of place) in the communitities of which they were a part. The articles examined within the newspaper samples illustrated the policing and regulation of commercial sex through morally-charged public discourses.[5]

This public discourse on prostitution had become a vital topic at the end of the twentieth-

century, and attempted to depict the sex trade as a broad civic menace. In the newspapers examined in this study, the articulation of this controversy was instrumental in revealing not only the shifting terms of sexual and moral discourses, but also the ways in which these discourses were used as extensions of existing socioeconomic power structures. Commercial sex could never be eradicated from the New Orleans, New York or London communities, but its active repression did have long lasting consequences. After reformers drove the Social Evil "underground," prostitution became more closely yoked to liquor, drugs, theft, and increased violence.[6] And, although prostitution has lost the powerful symbolic meaning that it possessed at the turn of the twentieth-century, it is still viewed by many as alien, immoral, and now, criminal activity.[7]

Foucault defined "the insistence of the rule" as power that dictates its law to sex and sexual matters.[8] Within this paradigm, sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden.[9] Through the enactment of power over sexuality, an artificial "order" is created for sex that is maintained through the act of articulating the very laws which circumscribe it.[10] This artificial construction of meaning, through the creation of a separateness between orderly and disorderly, respectable and disreputable, moral and immoral is negotiated, and permeates every layer of society. As stated by Judith Walkowitz, "the [narratives during this era] adhere to a certain invention of the Victorian past, expressed through an overworld/underworld structure" that informed the political lessons drawn from them.[11] It is this division between conflicting societal halves which aided in the realization of a newly defined image for the urban prostitute as expressed through the depiction of moral versus immoral behavior in the press.[12]

The policing and classification of women's public activities constituted a recurring theme in all three newspapers within this study. Clearly, the larger more industrial cities in both America and Britian had to contend with changing attitudes concerning public spaces and the

activites that were to be carried on within. These evermore populated and congested urban interiors created new public spaces where an unprecedented mixing of classes was enabled. Public parks, museums, and the new department stores were open to all strata of society.[13] And while this crossing of class boundaries did provide for an extended market for the sex trade, it also brought to light more general problems concerning the mixing of men and women, and notions of appropriate conduct in the public sphere.

During the end of the nineteenth century, women were leaving their homes in increasing numbers to find employment.[14] A woman walking alone in public during reasonable hours could no longer be assumed to be a "public woman" as in the past. As Ruth Rosen has stated, "As women from all classes increasingly entered the public arena, either through their participation in the labor force or through their involvement in middle-class social reform movements, they implicitly challenged the nineteenth century doctrine of separate male and female spheres."[15] It was necessary, then, that new boundaries of morality and respectability were drawn to both reinforce notions of conventional morality and civilized urban living.[16]

Prostitution, as an activity which threatened the most stringent of class, gender, and moral barriers, was to bear the brunt of civic outrage concerning the renegotiation of urban public sites. Prostitutes, in their transgressive public activities, were also a threat to traditional patriarchal values and an element which required restraint, containment, and control. Growing anxieties over their unchecked public behavior inspired the gradual development of a specialized private/state apparatus to police, prosecute, and incarcerate disorderly women. Citizen-based vice reformation leagues were formed in unprecedented numbers in this era in America and Britain, acting as adjunct city operatives which worked to activate laxly enforced civic legislation.[17] Often comprised of middle to upper-class women, these reformation leagues were successful in creating national networks of women's groups which considered prostitution to be as significant as other

reforms, like sufferage and child labor laws.[18] In America, women sometimes joined with men to form a major political and social lobby for "red light" abatement acts, and were instrumental in seeing their passage in many states.[19]

The evolution of the perception of the sex trade, within the timeframe studied, was revealed as part of an ongoing process involving the exclusion of disorderly prostitution from imagined sites of orderly sexuality partly through the activism of these sorts of civic organizations.[20] Through the focus of media-generated attention which tracked the reformers' efforts, the female prostitute had become the quintessential public symbol of vice, and a physical signifier for the disorderly aspects of modern urban life. As an immoral societal element, the prostitute was effectively marginalized by the reformation movement, placing her outside the boundaries of respectable heterosexual norms. In so doing, the reformation legislation that was enacted during this period attempted to normalize the middle-class nuclear family as a hegemonic sexual and cultural norm, and worked to make dominant moral codes more clearly defined and more socially entrenched.[21]

The reform movements which gained their momentum in the mid-nineteenth century in both America and Britain made it abundantly clear that they wanted a single standard of morality, one based upon the ideals of the traditional nuclear family. The enforcement of prostitution, in all three of the cities examined, showed a marked tendancy in the enforcement of anti-prostitution legislation in areas where it was perceived to be "out of place," and a potential threat to the nuclear family.[22] The police tended to target soliciting women only when their practice was situated in residential and/or "respectable" neighborhoods.[23] The creation of the "red light district" in New Orleans, as well as the movement of prostitution to the fringes of the urban centers of New York and London, were part of repositioning of the prostitute vis-a-vis society. This process involved the exclusion of disorderly prostitution from the areas of the city which

were perceived as orderly. In the marginalization of prostitution to specific inner city zones, prostitutes were redefined as deviant sexual subjects that were associated with particular disreputable locations.[24]

In all three of the newspapers examined, prostitution was also often linked with concerns over increased rates of venereal disease, creating the image of the prostitute as a disseminator of illness and a menace to society. This notion became especially prevelant during the onset of World War I. The public hygiene laws that targeted the sex trade, and were temporarily enacted in all three cities, were a manifestation of the further criminalization of prostitution through governmental initiatives.[25] They were also significant because they refocused the public attack upon the prostitute rather than prostitution per se.[26] Within this era, the new enforcement of "social hygiene" had become a euphemism for sexual regulation and control of the urban sex trade.

All three newspapers reveal the emergence of an Othering discourse in relation to their stance on the prostitution-related controversies. In the efforts of the reformers to connect the sex trade to a variety of problematic social issues, the female prostitute was effectively redefined, vilified, and forced from the public eye. Reformers, public health physicians, and politicians who wanted to regulate the behavior and labor of working-class women emphasized that their campaigns were designed to both sanitize and hide the presence of socially defined immoral and unhealthy women from in the urban landscape.[27] The Contagious Diseases Acts of London are among some of the earliest attempts to control prostitution through the arena of public health. As Michel Foucault has posited:

> [Science] thus became associated with an insistent and indiscreet medical practice, glibly proclaiming its aversions, quick to run to the rescue of law and public opinion, more servile with respect to the

> powers of order than amenable to the requirements of truth... it set itself up as the supreme authority in matters of hygienic necessity... it claimed to ensure the physical vigor and the moral cleanliness of the social body...[28]

As the permeable and transgressed border between classes, and as the carrier of physical and moral pollution, the prostitute was the object of this new "policing" of the sexual body. As the C.D.P. Acts in Britain and other public health sanctions in America attest, the prostitute's profession, as a dangerous form of sexual activity, was attempted to be controlled and defined by the state in order to maintain the preservation of conventional moral standards.[29]

The topic of public hygiene was also often linked in the press with growing concerns over increased rates of immigration and the importation of foreign illnesses. While all three cities' newspapers also point to growing concern over the effects of unchecked immigration, this fear of "foreign contamination" seemed to be more pronounced in New York and London. Prostitution was repeatedly linked to the lower-classes, and to the areas where poorer immigrants were more likely to make their homes. Crowded tenements were targeted as sources for the housing of the greatest numbers of urban prostitutes. This association of prostitution with lower-class immigrants was an influential tool in the reformers' arsenal against vice. By portraying prostitutes as inhabiting a marginal and purportedly inferior communities, reformers characterized these lower-class women as existing outside the boundaries of respectable society. In effect, they were cast as social pariahs, unacceptable for middle-class assimilation.

The "white slave trafficking" controversy which was so prominent in the New York and London newspapers also played upon these xenophobic fears. At its core this debate was deeply racist, and implied that white young women of European dissent were its primary victims. Although largely a product of the excesses of yellow journalism, the emergence of the "white

slave trafficking" narrative crystalized a range of fears about modern urban culture, the public's seeming lack of consensus, and the media's ability to ignite controversy and to inspire social movements on a mass scale.[30] Gretchen Soderlund has suggested that *The New York Times*' coverage of this isssue "was instrumental in constructing a mental enclave in which elites could represent supposed reality without undue reference to the streets."[31] In so doing, the "white slave trafficking" controversy also established and legitimized new strategies for the shaping of information for general readership, and reinforced the role of the newspaper as a bearer of significant social and moral meaning.[32]

One of the most surprising elements in this study was the lack of evidence of press coverage over the "white slave trafficking" reportage which had gripped the readers of both *The New York* and *London Times*. Although New Orleans was not considered a major port for the importation of women for the commercial sex trade, further research in this area could illuminate the reasons why this was the case. It is not clear whether *The New Orleans Daily Picayune* was more resistant to these sorts of sensational narratives, or if the cultural climate in New Orleans did not lend itself to these types of portrayals of "white" prostitution. Clearly, these newspapers were targeted to an audience (mostly white, male, and middle-class) which took certain cultural assumptions for granted. Since the stance on "white trafficking" was filtered through this viewpoint, it is possible to see the extent to which underlying implications about race were revealed in these narratives. They implied that the real injustice was not in the trafficking of women in general, but of white women in particular.

The New Orleans and New York press coverage did share a common theme that was largely absent from *The London Times*. In both of these journals the rates of prostitution and the proliferation of vice were repeatedly linked to a corrupt municipal government.The shift in the politicization of prostitution conveyed by these narratives were marked by the distinctly civic

vocabulary which framed them. Prostitution was depicted as a civic problem that was "rotting the soul of the community."[33] City officials were often portrayed as lax and inefficient in the execution of particular vice laws, and were more often than not, accused of turning a blind eye in return for illicit pay-offs. Through these types of narratives, prostitution became a politically-charged issue upon which candidiates based their platforms and promised renewed attempts at successful reformation.

The press coverage of prostitution in *The London Times* was particularly interesting because there were considerably more articles which gave an oppositional viewpoint to reformationist legislation. Although usually in the form of a letter to the editor, these texts show a much more balanced representation of the debates which surrounded prostitution, and unlike the New Orleans and New York press, often expressed a true sympathy for the plight of these women and a concern for their rights as individuals. In this sense, the London coverage of prostitution did not depict the trade in such black and white terms as it was in the American press, and seemed to offer more of an intellectual dialogue concerning these matters. It was only in the London sample of articles in which anti-prostitution laws were ever described as "clumsy, brutal, [and] as likely to be ineffectual."[34] Within the New Orleans and New York samples, the gradual development of specialized private and state apparatus to police, prosecute, and incarcerate delinquent women was continually portrayed as beneficial to all concerned.

All of the articles examined within this study support Michel Foucault's theories on the politicization of sexuality as expressed through social mechanisms. In particular there was a distinct discourse which emerged through these historical texts that underscored the social significance of the "management" of sexuality and the meanings which surrounded it. As Foucault stated in *The History of Sexuality*:

> Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one

> administered. It was in the nature of a public potential; it called for management procedures; it had to be taken charge of by analytical discourses.[35]

Prostitution, as a commercialized and therefore more problematic and stygmatized version of sexuality, was especially the focus of this sort of social/moral scrutiny. Because of the perceived prominence of prostitution in the last decades of the nineteenth century, its containment and control became of central concern to those who attempted to retranscript its role in society and to Other those who were involved in the commercial sex trade.

Modern Western societies have constructed sexuality, in Foucauldian terms, "in the body as a mode of specification of individuals."[36] Owing to this, the social construction of sexuality has served as a key channel for the operation of power, facilitating the regulation of bodies, conduct, and spaces, and the production of discourses and knowledges.[37] If, as Michael Schudson has suggested, modern newspapers have become part of a "social function of building solidarity and reaffirming common values within a community," then they are certainly reflective of the moral and social controversies which have been debated and negotiated in the context of particular societies at key historical moments.[38]

At the end of the nineteenth century, newspaper reporters took on new authority as the presenters of public life.[39] The most important, controversial, and politically relevant issues of the day were presented and articulated for the mass consumption of a general readership. With their increased status as a forum for serious public discourse, the media became a central institution in the cultural construction of American and British nationhood and cityhoods.[40] As historically situated texts, newspapers reveal the development of print media as an aid to the development of a community's collective public life. And, as this study has shown, the analysis of these texts is relevant because it brings these public discourses to light, and offer insights into

the sociopolitical strategies which aided in their construction. The workings of the mechanisms of power are then more clearly perceived, and within this process, the active repression, marginalization, and Othering of individuals and groups which were seen as threats to the status-quo are also illuminated.

This study has sought to further the discussion of the role of the media as a forum for sociopolitical discourse. Through this examination of some of the narratives constructed within the pages of such a public forum, it became evident that the media hold a key position in the articulation of social meaning. Newspapers reflect a sense of cultural "reality" to their readers, aiding in the creation of specific perspectives concerning morality and the community. The civic organizations that fought for antiprostitution legislation drew support from the narratives which were presented in the press, and used their influence to aid in the advancement of their cause. The press was, and is, a powerful tool of political commentary.

By examining the press coverage of prostitution in particular (a topic which has garnered little research in the past), this study has also focused on the articulation and creation of a public moral majority. In addressing this issue, this study helps to fill the gap in media scholarship that had not been adequately addressed--- specifically, the ideological underpinnings that defined the relationship between public sentiment and the representation of prostitution in the press. This examination was also extended to provide a comparison across three major cities, noting the similarities and differences of each. The comparison across cities, as opposed to across different newspapers within a single city, helped to illuminate the manner in which social meanings (as represented in major newspapers) are a product of a specific social climate. The sociopolitical character of the society in which these representations were couched ascribed very particular connotations to the moral dialogue in which they were engaged, acting to create specific civic boundaries, Othering the prostitute, and maintaining the local version of the status-quo.

It is this focus on the discourse on the Othering of prostitution that this study has sought to examine, particularly as it was publicized and problemitized in *The New Orleans Daily Picayune*, *The New York Times*, and *The London Times* between 1880 and 1917. These newspapers' articles and editorials often highlighted this discourse, putting forth a specific conception of social maintenance in each of these cities, reinforcing the types of social hierarchies upon which the upper strata of society depended. They also show the gradual shift in the discourse on prostitution from a "necessary evil" to a "social evil" which required policing, surveillance, and the hope of eventual eradication. The eradication of a highly visible urban sex trade was touted as a hallmark of Progressive reform, and a necessity for both the preservation of traditional values and the betterment of the community. The vilification and Othering of prostitutes, then, was an essential component of this public discourse, acting as a guise to promote social stability and to ensure economic prosperity for the cities' future development.

Notes:

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

1. Philip Hubbard, *Sex and the City: Geographies of Prostitution in the Urban West*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 103.
2. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1-3,* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 26.
3. Ibid, 53.
4. Ibid, 3.
5. Ibid, 25.
6. Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America*, 1900-1918, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 169.
7. Ibid, 171.
8. Foucault, 85.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid, 83.
11. Judith Walkowitz ,*City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4.
12. Ibid, 238.
13. See Carroll Smith-Rosenburg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1985).
14. Rosen, xiii.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. See for example, Marylin Wood Hill, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Prostitution in New York City 1830-1870* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America*, 1900-1918, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.,1992),and Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State.* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980)
18. Rosen, 51.
19. Ibid, 52.
20. Ibid, 180.
21. Hubbard, 503.
22. Ibid, 502.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid, 503.
25. David J. Pivar, "A Walk on the Dark Side," *Reviews in American History* 1993 21(3): 430-435., 433.
26. Ibid.
27. Donna J. Guy, "Stigma, Pleasures, and Dutiful Daughters" *Journal of Women's History* 1998, 10 (3): 181-191., 182.
28. Foucault, 54.
29. Walkowitz, *City*, 22.
30. Gretchen Soderlund, "Covering Urban Vice: The New York Times, 'White Slavery,' and the Construction of Journalistic Knowledge," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (4): 438-460., 454.
31. Ibid, 456.
32. Ibid.
33. "Tenement House Hearing," *The NY Times*, March 27, 1901.
34. "The Outside of the Platter," *The London Times*, April 23, 1884.
35. Foucault, 24.
36. Ibid, 37.
37. Ibid.
38. Schudson, 426
39. Ibid, 438.

40. Ibid, 428.

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