Defining 'Pimp': Working Towards a Definition in Social Research

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Abstract

Recently expanding research on prostitution has led to slightly more focus on an enigmatic yet major player within the underground sex economy: pimps. Whilst starting to shed light on the roles, and behavior of pimps, researchers have overlooked a fundamental element within social research that calls for the explicit definition of subjects. The ambiguous use of the word pimp across research projects impedes comparability, consistency and clarity within the growing body of literature on this topic. In an attempt to draw attention to the oversight of defining 'pimp', this paper proposes criteria and processes for a more robust definition and offers a more comprehensive definition of 'pimp'. The definitional processes suggested are reviewed within this paper through exploration of the history, cultural context, mainstream usage, academic applications and feedback from pimps. This paper integrates data from in-depth interviews with pimps to offer their invaluable insight on the meaning of the word. The core objectives of this paper are to draw attention to the problematic definitional trends in this body of research, and propose new foundations for defining 'pimp' within social research.

Keywords: *Definitional Processes, Social Research Definitions, Pimp/s, Prostitution Research*

Introduction

1.1 Durkheim in his classic work *Suicide* (Durkheim 1897) identified lack of clarity as one of the risks of employing and relying on mainstream definitions within research; we must acknowledge the importance of clarity in defining phenomena and the consequences of failing to scrutinize our use of terms.

'[For] the words of everyday language, like the concepts they express, are always susceptible of more than one meaning, and the scholar employing them in their accepted use without further definition would risk serious misunderstanding.' (Durkheim 1897: 41)

1.2 The need for distinction between everyday usage and academic definitions is especially important when utilizing words that have broad meaning within the cultural and social imagination. Thus careful attention is due when embarking on subjects which carry multiple meanings; as was certainly the case when I chose to focus my research on pimps in the United States of America. Inconsistent use of the word pimp in academic and social research has far reaching consequences. Variation in the application of this term leads to the simultaneous false exclusion and false inclusion^[1] of individuals in samples, and undermines comparability across projects. Though describing current definitions as both falsely inclusive and falsely exclusive seems to be a major contradiction, there is just support for such a statement. As will be discussed throughout this paper, academic definitions include individuals who do not fit the understood definition meanwhile excluding those who should be included within research samples. For example, a definition which indicates that a pimp is a male (implied by the regular use of he) who lives off the earnings of a woman in prostitution, would inappropriately include partners, boyfriends and even male children of prostitutes all the while excluding female pimps and male prostitutes (Pheterson 1993). Thus ineffectively identifying some as pimps while neglecting individuals who are pimps. Current literature limits comparability but comparability in social research is imperative as Durkheim (1897) points out,

'Only comparison affords explanation. A scientific investigation can thus be achieved only if it deals with comparable facts, and it is the more likely to succeed the more certainly it has

combined all those that can be usefully compared.' (41)

1.3 One key objective of this paper is to explore the definitional processes undertaken to define the word 'pimp' in this research. Guiding considerations in the process includes the development of a definition that is researchable and strongly influenced by the social reality of pimping. Complications for researchers involved in the creation of a working definition of 'pimp' are addressed in this paper through a brief review of the history of the word, academic contributions, and definitions offered by respondents. The following discussions highlight current trends and necessary considerations related to the word 'pimp' for the formation of an workable, valid definition.

1.4 Academic definitions can capture the social reality, roles, and experiences of subcultures, but in the case of pimping, these definitions have fallen short of capturing crucial elements of the word 'pimp'. In this paper, reviews of the literature definitions and support from the research presented will highlight the limitations and problems current in defining the word. Additionally, current definitions have been exogenously authored and applied, thus have failed to integrate the input and opinions of those who earn this title. Within my research, a commitment to the voice of pimps was key; therefore, in this paper, continuous returning to the data and opinions of respondents is critical to produce a definition that integrates the contributions of pimps themselves. It is necessary to define the idea, concept, action, and/or role of 'pimp' but the definitional process is complex due to variations in the experiences and social contexts. Within social research, particularly research involving marginal groups, creating definitions that draw lines of who is 'in' and who is 'out' is highly conditional and sometimes controversial. Furthermore, definitions tend to be inflexible and rigid within the epistemologies utilized in mainstream, particularly state sponsored, research.

1.5 There are many different types of sex workers (Chapkis 1997) and therefore there are many ways of pimping and/or being a pimp (Bernstein 2007; Pheterson 1993), contrast for example the samples of Williamson & Cluse-Tolar (2002) and Spidel et.al (2006). The autobiographical literature written by pimps also illustrates their diversity, for example, contrast Beck (1969) and Armstrong (2006). The research discussed in this paper focused on pimps involved in illegal street prostitution but even within this small and focused sample the socio-demographics of the respondents varied. Pimps are a diverse population and the definition should reflect this heterogeneous reality. Additionally, the definition of pimp needs to be comprehensive enough to include the experiences of those who fit this role yet still allow researchers to explore the different ways in which various subcultural groups of pimps function and operate. The heterogeneity of pimping cannot be stressed enough, as this is not a role that can be articulated through inflexible definitions; a definition that grants the necessary inclusions and exclusions is critical.

1.6 The data disclosed in this paper was collected between December of 2010 and July of 2011 in the United States of America. Data was collected through exploratory, self-funded, doctoral research focusing on pimps and their experiences of pimping in illegal street prostitution in the United States of America. The overall aim of the research was to increase current understandings of the experiences of pimps involved in illegal prostitution as the literature on this population is exceptionally limited. The research included ten interviews, conducted with nine individuals, who identified as pimps, or former pimps. One respondent was interviewed twice. Respondents work/ed in various cities across the United States, and all are/were involved in illegal street prostitution acting as pimps. Respondents' involvement in pimping ranged from less than two years to twenty-five years of experience and an estimation of their ages would likely place respondents between the ages of thirty to sixty, with most in their fifties. All of the respondents were Black Americans and two of the respondents were women while the remaining seven were male. Differences in educational attainment, socio-economic background, household and familial composition, involvement in other illegal activities all highlighted the variation in backgrounds of individuals who become involved in The Game. The heterogeneity of this group is further illustrated by the variety in class, sexuality, gender and creeds represented in the sample.

1.7 Influenced both by the exploratory nature of this research and by a desire to allow respondents control over the flow, pace and content of the interviews, interviews were conducted in an unstructured and responsive format. The utilization of unstructured interviewing was influenced by limited prior research restricting the possibility of constructing informed interview schedules, and a desire to treat the respondents as experts on their own lives and experiences. My request for a definition of 'pimp' was the only question intentionally asked of all respondents so that I could be clear of exactly what they were self-identifying as. Interviews averaged approximately two hours in length. Six of the interviews took place in a public face-to-face context while the other four were conducted over the telephone

1.8 The hidden nature of this population and their involvement in illegal underground economies presented extreme difficulties in respondent recruitment thus limiting the sample. I was able to secure interviews with some former pimps locating them through their public profiles as former pimps. The remaining respondents were recruited with the assistance of a gatekeeper. The gatekeeper's previous twenty-five year involvement in prostitution enabled reliable references and networks of individuals involved in street prostitution. The gatekeeper's specific connections to pimps involved in illegal street prostitution further allowed for exploration of a specific culture within pimping. Her networks, the gatekeepers' that is, linked mostly to Black men and women involved in pimping, and this reflects a trend within the underground community that is discussed later in this paper. Given that just over half the sample was recruited through this gatekeeper, this will have limited the sample characteristics. Having previously worked with this gatekeeper I was confident in her reliability and credibility. The gatekeeper, for a fee, contacted potential respondents, informed them of the research, and then put them in direct contact with me if they were interested in participation. Some respondents were recruited when respondents passed my information onto 'pimp' friends interested in taking part. Ultimately, these recruitment methods were utilized because other means were restricted by ethical considerations and concerns for my safety.

1.9 Ethical and legal considerations constrained methods as safety (physically and legally), anonymity and protection of both the respondents and myself were leading concerns throughout the project. Ethical issues directly impacted the choice of methods, locations, and sampling due to a variety of risks including but not limited to threat of violence, loss of anonymity, threat of legal injunctions, seizure of data, bodily harm, mental/emotional trauma, and/or financial exploitation. Thus, methods such as participant observation were deemed too hazardous as were locations such as respondents' homes. The nature of the populations activities and behavior combined with my position as a lone, young, female researcher meant that safety and ethical issues had a deep impact on the overall research design of this project.

1.10 Introducing first the history of the word pimp, this paper will then seek to assess current usage of the word in academic literature and research, and then engage in a discussion of respondents' definitions. This paper will then outline changes made in the original research definition of pimp: an individual (male or female) that controls the lives and proceeds of one or more women working in prostitution (Giobbe 1993; Williamson & Cluse-Tolar 2002). The reformulated definition is an individual who financially profits from, and manages the activities and income of, one or more individuals involved in prostitution.

The Word

2.1 Locating information on the appearance and history of the word pimp is difficult as the etymology of the word is not well documented and is shrouded in lore. The origins of the word and early usage are arduous to trace as the word only starts to appear in American academic literatures in the 1930's. Sheildlower (2008) explains 'It first appeared in English around 1600 and was used then as now to mean 'a person who arranges opportunities for sexual intercourse with a prostitute.'" The figurative meaning, 'a person who panders to an undesirable or immoral impulse (Sheildlower 2008),' was found by the middle of the 17th century; The verb to pimp dates from the early 17th century (Sheildlower 2008). The Oxford Dictionary (2001) suggests that the origins of the word trace back to the 16th century and are of unknown origins which is also supported by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2011). The connection between possible original usages of the word to modern usage has, as well as its origin, yet to be uncovered. Therefore, currently the possible origins of the word offer little insight into the history of the word, the original context and its current meanings. To shed light on current usage, this section will first consider definitions found in dictionaries, which reflect current, common meanings and usage in mainstream language, before proceeding to socially locate the term in the specific context of this research.

Dictionary Definitions

2.2 Examination of reputable dictionary definitions grants insight into the current uses of the word which have adapted from possible original meanings. These definitions also highlight the need for researchers to make their definition of pimp explicit as to avoid confusion with common understandings of the word. Pimp is now associated with various meanings and could easily led to misinterpretation of the individual or activity that is being discussed. Thus highlighting the need to specifically explain and define in clear terms the context, role and action that is meant to be communicated through usage of the word.

2.3 As a verb: to pimp: The Oxford Dictionary (2011) currently defines pimp in its verb tense as

- '1 [no object] (often as noun pimping) act as a pimp.
- [with object] provide (someone) as a prostitute.
- [with object] informal sell or promote (something) in an extravagant or persistent way: he pimped their debut album to staff writers at Rolling Stone??
- 2 [with object] informal make (something) more showy or impressive??'

2.4 In the definition above, the multiple uses of the term becomes clear; separated by informal and what one can only suppose is the formal usage. Pimping is described in relation to the underground career associated with prostitution and secondly as a term used in mainstream culture to describe the act of pimping as an action which improves material goods in a flamboyant and flashy manner.

2.5 As an adjective: the word can be used to refer to something as being cool, fashionable, glamorous and/or extravagant. As is mentioned in the Oxford Dictionary's (2011) definition of pimp as a verb, pimping is now synonymous with improving something by making it more flashy or showy thus when an object is described as 'pimp', it refers again to the object being flashy, trendy and/or 'cool'.

2.6 As a noun: The Oxford Dictionary (2011) defines pimp as 'a man who controls prostitutes and arranges clients for them, taking part of their earnings in return.' The Cambridge Dictionary defines a pimp as 'a man who controls prostitutes, especially by finding customers for them, and takes some of the money that they earn.' (Cambridge Dictionary 2011)

2.7 As indicated above, the word pimp can be applied in multiple contexts. Pimping is the action, verb tense of pimp, and used in relation to the world of prostitution. In The Game, pimp literally means to pimp but in cultural application 'pimping' refers to improving something, making it more trendy/cool or to transform something into extravagant (i.e. MTV's Pimp My Ride). Pimp is a role and a title, therefore a noun, prescribed to individuals who manage people who work in prostitution. To describe something as pimp, in the adjective form, is to describe something cool and trendy.

2.8 Supporting the emergence of popular cultural use of pimp, the Oxford Dictionary.com (2011)

assesses the evolution of the word pimp from a formerly pejorative, negative term to a more positive and culturally embraced term. The Oxford Dictionary (2011) explains that 'the popularity of hip-hop culture has made the pimp a figure of social aspiration for some people, with the word increasingly associated with a glamorous world of champagne, fast cars, and flashy jewelry.'

2.9 Recent changes in the usage of this word creates the possibility that it can trigger varying responses and interpretations from audiences. Because of this, it is crucial that researchers explicitly define and identify the populations and behavior they are researching in order to avoid misinterpretations. Beyond trends in usage, there are also emerging patterns in the representation and social locations of pimps. The following section will explore these elements and attempt to place pimp with its cultural context in the USA.

Social location

3.1 It would be erroneous to tackle the word pimp without placing it within the specific context and location of this research. Pimp is now associated strongly with American culture and more specifically African American culture. This research was intentionally focused on pimp populations in the United States to investigate the unique and dynamic subcultures that exist within that location. Part of the enigma surrounding pimps in the USA lies in the remarkable juxtaposition between their public and mainstream idolization, glamorization and visibility, and their hidden, underground criminal activities. Thus bridging the understanding between this public image with the realities of pimping is important to assess the impact this has on the identification and identity of pimps. This is reflected in the use of the word, therefore, below is a brief discussion on the associations with the word along with the history and reasons for it.

3.2 It is with extreme caution and care that I address issues relating to race and pimping in the United States. As a white researcher trying to negotiate the politics of representation, I can only hope that the critical feminist theoretical approaches of this research do justice to the attention and consideration required for fair representation and exploration for the people researched. I am concerned that supporting a link between pimping and African Americans will only further support the marginalization, stereotyping and prejudices that are rife within the United States. Ultimately, the denial of an association and link would also do damage in further silencing the experiences and lives of these individuals thus supporting an overriding system of exclusion and disenfranchisement. I find myself in full agreement with Philippe Bourgois (2003) who reflects on these issues regarding his research with Puerto Rican drug dealers in East Harlem:

'Countering traditional moralistic biases and middle-class hostility toward the poor come at the cost of sanitizing the suffering and destruction that exists on inner-city streets. Out of a righteous, or a "politically sensitive," fear of giving the poor a bad image, I refuse to ignore or minimize the social misery I witnessed, because that would make me complicitous with oppression' (11-12)

3.3 The coffee-table, sepia photography pimp book, *Pimprosis*, further suggests 'The image of the pimp is so deeply ingrained in the national subconscious that is now full-blown Americana.' (Funches and Marriott 2002: 5). Funches and Marriott further add that 'in the cultural imagination, pimping is 100 percent American.' (5) 'Pimps' exist throughout the world but there is something specific and extraordinarily unique about pimps in the United States and it is within this setting that the following discussion is placed. The subculture surrounding pimps in the United States is unlike elsewhere in the world due to the unique cultural context of a legacy of legal and social racism, structural violence, poverty, law enforcement and legal systems, patriarchal social structures, and finally, overlapping operations and cultures of other illegal underground economies. International and domestic understandings of the word is rooted in American cultural interpretations created by film, hip hop, street culture and literature all which is informed and influenced by the dynamic, boisterous subculture of pimping and other street hustlers.

3.4 'Pimp' is a term deeply entrenched and strongly associated with Black street culture and hip hop/rap music. The pimp was introduced into mainstream America through the literary works of Robert Beck aka Iceberg Slim (1960s) and Donald Goines (1960s & 1970s) but did not officially arrive on the popular scene until the pimp, as a heroic figure and subversive icon, received heavy coverage in recently mainstreamed rap and hip hop music. The emergence of hip hop and rap into popular culture in the 1980s introduced America to a character who was revered in street culture for his sexual prowess, sharp intellect, unparalleled rapping skills and mastery of subordinated women to claim his place as an intensely heterosexual, formidable and dominant male (Sharpley-Whiting 2007; hooks 2004; Majors & Billson 1992).

3.5 Popular images of pimps further solidify the association of pimping and Black males. MTV's *Pimp My Ride* employed a Black male host, Xzibit, to pimp out cars, the majority of pimp authors are also Black males, and the overwhelming majority of hip hop and rap artists who write music about pimping, are again Black males. The reinforcement of the deviant, criminal, hypersexual and defiant Black male stereotype is clear with their overexposure related to pimping, but when it comes to illegal, street level prostitution, Black males seem to represent the overwhelming majority of participants (Hodgson 1997).

3.6 The figure of the pimp is strongly associated with African American culture, and due to this historical context, multiple pimp authors adamantly assert that pimping is the Black man's domain (Funches and Marriott 2002; Gholson 2001; Pimp 1999). Several respondents within this research engaged in discussions regarding the difficulty white pimps face trying to enter the world of pimping, or The Game. They further supported the idea that Black men are not falsely overrepresented in pimping, but are dominant within a particular vein of The Game. Thus it seems the association is supported by a social reality. Data from my own research supports that of Hodgson's (1997) demonstrating that racial

hierarchies within sex work mirror those of legal employment. White pimps, having access to more money, better education and social capital, tend to dominate pimping at the top of the ladder by running in-door brothels, massage parlors and escort services. By allowing white males access to resources not readily available to non-white males, white privilege enables them to remain hidden from the public and law enforcement. Due to a lack of the aforementioned, Black males who get involved in pimping are more likely to get involved at the illegal street level pimping (Hodgson 1997).

3.7 Quinn (2000) suggests 'The pimp figure has long been associated with the trickster in African-American vernacular traditions and it is above all the persuasive power, verbal skill, and emphasis on simulation which link the two' (118), thus further cementing a strong connection between what is means to be a pimp and what skills are necessary to be successful in pimping along with an emphasis on racial profiles. Within the United States an even more specific image is invoked and connected to the word pimp; 'In the popular imagination, the pimp is typically conjured as a smartly dressed, smooth talking, and relatively youthful African American male.' (Bernstein 2007:52-53) But this connection may go beyond popular imagination and media connections. In *The Pimp's Bible*, Gholson (2001) explains 'the pimp is a black man's creation' (40), and Master Pimp (1999) further asserts that 'The pimp shunned and intimidated White society by being flamboyant and displaying his wealth.' (3) Master Pimp (1999) expresses the belief that Black male participation in pimping signifies active resistance to racist structural violence and dominance.

3.8 In this research, not for lack of trying, I was unable to access white street pimps; they represent a small cohort of individuals within an already hidden and small population, thus their location is arduous to say the least. White pimps are present within mainstreamed pimp books and 'pimpumentaries' such as 'Pimps Up, Hos Down' (1998) and 'American Pimp' (1998), thus they are a visible minority. If we rely on autobiographical and documentary contributions of white pimps, they make clear a strong association between race and illegal street pimping in the USA. The following two quotes from the book *Memoirs of a White Pimp* (2004) demonstrate the authors understanding of race in relation to his participation as a white male in pimping:

'So these Atlantic City whores started talking about 'the new white pimp' in town. This was a creature rare to the pimp and prostitute circle.' (Kramer 2004: 31)

'I did what no man had ever done in Atlantic City- I had crossed the racial line which had never let a white man cross over into the game. It hadn't been easy to receive the respect I deserved from the black macks^[2]. They considered all white men tricks' (Kramer 2004: 37)

3.9 For many within and outside The Game, pimping is seen as a site of social resistance and anti-racist conquest. In this ideological approach a superficial, misinformed exploration shows the Black man successfully profiting from the weakness of white men. The belief that 'tricks' are strictly white is a resilient one which serves to validate pimps and their roles, but has repeatedly proved false in research (Benstein 2007; Giusta et al. 2009; Monto & Hotaling 2001; Monto 2004). Again, differentiation between the figure of the pimp and the social reality are relevant. Quinn's (2000) cultural exploration of the pimp figure leads him to conclude that 'the pimp figure has, probably most fully, resisted the dynamics of mainstream incorporation, market co-optation, and white imitation' (136). Thus it could be that pimping has become a location of street resistance to white, mainstream lifestyles and racial and structural oppressions, but this perspective is romantically optimistic.

3.10 It is tempting to glamorize the role of the subversive pimp but it must be consistently considered that pimps idealize and ruthlessly pursue values of greed, profit, power, materialism, status, fame and wealth: all familiar to mainstream white American values thus only the means are deviant as opposed to the ends. Or as Horton- Stallings (2003) rebuts the 'hero pimp imagery' in her evaluation of Giones' book *Whoreson* and it's main character, *Whoreson*, a pimp:

'For the Black male, then, the rhetoric and philosophies of a pimp become a violent way back to the masculinity that he does not possess in society. Pimps, hustlers, and drug dealers are modern-day models of U.S.-colonized black bodies. They could never be as empowering as the trickster or bad nigga, primarily because the main heroic quality of the bad nigga and trickster is their ability to get one over on the white man. The admiration of the folk character is short-lived, for the violence the bad nigga inflicts on "whitey" always seems to end up misdirected. Whoreson... chooses to exact his vengeance not on the cause of his problem, white-supremacy systems or the Black middle class, but on those nearest to his wrath—the poor Black females he grew up loving. ... he does not become that bad nigger, simply another nigger. The common and daily exploitation of one's community does not make one heroic.' (199)

3.11 The above exploration of Horton-Stalling (2003) sufficiently and directly addresses any assumptions about the heroic role of the pimp by highlighting how this role victimizes and undermines their own community. Thus closer examination of the social reality of the pimp emphasizes the exploitation, especially within one's own community, that often accompanies the workings of the street pimp (Cole & Guy-Sheftall 2003 ; Horton- Stalling 2003).

3.12 Beyond music and literature the pimp has also successfully captured American audiences through films such as 'American Pimp' (1998) and 'Pimps Up, Hos Down' (1998) recently. Historically blacksploitation films such as 'The Mack' (1973), thrust the stereotypical pimp image at audiences ready to both condemn and respect the iconic ghetto figure (Cole & Guy-Sheftall 2003; Hill-Collins 2005). The result of the mainstream coverage of pimps and their lives has lead to an uncomfortable yet strangely passive relationship between accepted public persona and the realities of pimping. While their activities

are seen and understood as illegal and problematic, they capture imagination through a shroud of secrecy and a flamboyant image of the uncontested, full blown hegemonic, ultimate playboy, anti-establishment male. This new defiant culture hero emerged out of America's ghettos in the 1960s and has cemented a place for pimps within everyday American culture and terminology.

Contested and Contesting Definitions

4.1 From a discussion of the usage of the word and cultural context, this paper now shifts focus to the word within social research. Differing from mainstream interpretations in various ways, research definitions of 'pimp' pose multiple challenges to researchers who try to capture the role, action, and subcultures of a heterogeneous group within a single definition. Distinction should be placed between defining pimp based on who pimps are and what role they play, versus defining them based on a more culturally influenced variables (i.e fashion, cars, personality characteristics). Merging these two aspects of pimps could greatly complicate identification of pimps and further impede comparability between research projects (for example Milner & Milner's (1972) definition). The following will explore various research definitions and will identify problematic trends within past attempts to define this population.

4.2 One of the earliest attempts at an academic exploration of pimps was undertaken in the 1930's by Reitman (1937) who offers the following definition of 'pimp':

'A pimp is a man (among homosexuals it may be a woman) who takes all or part of the earnings of women who sell their bodies for gain. He may have inveigled her into becoming a prostitute or acquired her after she started the business. Invariably he encourages her to continue in prostitution, and he may be either her lover or husband, but always he is her supposed protector' (264)

4.3 Reitman's (1937) definition includes explanations of pimps' roles, recruitment methods and the relationship between pimps and prostitutes. This definition focuses more on the relationship that is imperative to the existence of pimp, that between the pimp and prostitute. It focuses on what a pimp does, but is limited in scope due to the restriction on gender, inferences about sexuality, and assumptions of how pimps function, which does not include all pimps, thus excluding many.

4.4 Milner and Milner's (1972) ethnographic research provided a definition of 'pimp' which includes a brief explanation of the surrounding social context, the specific role of the pimp, and modes of self representation:

'Pimp: A man who lives off the proceeds of female prostitution. In Ghetto English, it also connotes the ability to control women and a predilection for flashy clothes, expensive cars, etc. He does not solicit for his women, and is a ghetto culture hero. A man may be called a pimp if he has merely succeeded at some endeavor or encounter with Whitey which required the guile of a gamester' (Milner & Milner 1972: 274)

4.5 This definition is informed by years of participant observation and intense researcher integration into the subculture (Milner & Milner 1972)^[3] to the extent that it could be said that both authors had 'gone native' while conducting this research^[4] therefore limiting their ability to author a non-cultural, universally applicable definition of the word pimp. Additionally, the definition offered by Milner & Milner (1972) is too rooted in a specific time, place and sample of individuals involved in a particular subcultural experience of pimping. Their definition allows for the incorporation of street understandings, the specific realities of the role of the pimp and again, is largely subculturally focused. This definition excludes women from the role of the pimp and reflects a racially biased assumption about the identity of pimps. Not every pimp is African American nor is this a determinant factor in one's pimping career, but what Milner and Milner (1972) are highlighting is a trend of pimp culture in illegal street prostitution in the USA.

4.6 Condemnatory, emotive definitions tend to dominate the prostitution literature, which unapologetically demonizes and vilifies pimps (see: Farley 2007; Giobbe 1993; Raphael & Shaprio 2004; Stark & Hodgson 2003). This is not noted with the intention of critiquing politically charged research, but to suggest that a research definition itself is likely more rigorous and consistent if, in this case, it is based off of role and meaning versus assumed behaviors and attitudes. Literature and research on prostitution currently falls into one of two camps (Anderson 2002; Chapkis 1997; Weitzer 2000). Firstly the prostitution as 'sex work' camp (see Chapkis 1997; Brewis & Linstead 2000; Weitzer 1996; Perkins et al. 1991) that identifies prostitution as legitimate work and should be decriminalized if not legal. Secondly there is the prostitution as 'violence against women' camp (see Farley 2004; McKinnon 1993, 2001; Jeffrys 1997; Dworkin 1997) which advocates the continued illegal status of prostitution because prostitution encourages and supports the sexual exploitation of women, violence against women, the objectification of women and oppressive patriarchal social patterns. Thus defining 'pimp' based on politically charged characteristics places prostitution literature in yet another contestable place as this trend in defining will likely only make the job of reconciling and comparing research between the 'sex work' and 'violence against women' camps even more strenuous. Ultimately, the currently raging battle between these two dominant camps within prostitution research is further complicating the potential for negotiation between definitions by offering politically charged definitions.

4.7 Generally, recent (1990's to present) prostitution research includes in the definition indefinite roles, operations and behaviors of pimps laden with judgment and vilification^[5]. It is difficult to find definitions in some research papers rather explanations are often offered instead. For example, Stark and Hodgson (2003) assert 'Pimps are men who batter, rape, and sell women for sex; they control the systems of prostitution' (p. 19). It is not that pimps do not participate in the above stated, but that the

definition/explanation offered by Stark and Hodgson (2003) explains assumed roles and behaviors as opposed to an explanation of what a pimp is and this seems to be a trend that is repeating within prostitution research.

4.8 Kennedy et. al's (2007) research begins to grapple with defining the term but quickly moves on to defamatory descriptions of pimps:

'Black's (1990) law dictionary defines a pimp as someone who obtains customers for a prostitute. The reality of most pimps, however, is that they use manipulation, threats, and violence to keep prostitutes from leaving the trade and live entirely off the women they recruit.' (p. 5)

4.9 The definition offered by Black's (1990) law dictionary is inadequate and inaccurate for application to social research. There appears to be discrepancies between the actual role of pimps and their activities, and what the law dictionary defines a pimp as. If we were to rely on definitions similar to the one offered by Black (1990), we would be excluding the vast majority of pimps because for the most part, pimps do not procure customers. Not only do most pimps have little to nothing to do with 'obtaining customers' for prostitutes, they rarely have anything to do with the individual, 'independent' work of the prostitute; they act as external managers not internal supervisors. Also, by avoiding the use of an academically sound and rigorous definition, the readers of the work by Kennedy et. al (2007) are likely left relying on cultural perceptions of what a pimp is and ultimately guessing what the authors mean when they use the word pimp.

4.10 Pheterson (1993) contributes to this discourse in presenting an outline of the archaic, repressive ideologies that she believes are the underlying reasons for opposition to prostitution. The analysis she provides grants considerable exploration of the idea of 'pimp' and the word itself. Pheterson (1993) defines a pimp as 'someone who profits from the earnings of a prostitute.' (p. 44)^[5] Her paper asserts that current anti-pimping laws are inherently racist and are meant to prosecute black men for prostituting white women. Furthering this line of thought, she offers:

'A pimp is presumed to *exploit* women, in particular *white teenage* women, to *deceive* them, *addict* them to drugs, *batter* them, *rape* them, and *abandon* them. He is conceived as 'the guilty party' whose malicious ways are responsible for victimizing young, innocent (often meant as white) women. As the seducer and corrupter of girls, he is the prototypical villain. Often he is portrayed as black, mean, manipulative, aggressive and lazy (Pheterson 1993: 48- emphasis from original text)

4.11 Most of the respondents I interviewed would not likely seek to debunk the sarcastic and exaggerated explanation Pheterson (1993) offers. Pheterson (1993) does tap into seriously problematic racial, sexist politics in the United States in relation to prostitution and pimping prosecution [i.e the White Slavery Act- Mann Act of 1910 (18 U.S.C. § § 2421– 2424)], but respondents' definitions, as discussed in the next section, and descriptions of how pimps work, do not vary drastically from the above. So although Pheterson (1993) sought to mock prior academic portrayals of pimps, her description is ironically accurate and/or at least accepted by pimps.

4.12 Williamson & Baker (2009) operationalize the term pimp as 'someone who has several women working for him at the same time, controls them through physical and verbal abuse, and profits from their prostitution-based earnings' (p. 32) based on previous research (Dalla 2006; Williamson & Cluse-Tolar 2002). This definition informed my original research definition, and the majority of my early work, but this description also needs some adaptations. The inclusion of the statement 'controls them through physical and verbal abuse' (p. 32) again places the reader in a position where the 'assumed actions' of pimps, as in not all pimps engage in the actions described, must be condemned in order to understand pimps. This sets up a position where readers are pushed to make early judgments about the population prior to exposure to the data. But the primary issue with this definition relates to gender; the assertion that pimps are male (working for him) and that prostitutes are female (several women working) limits the pimp role to men and excludes both female pimps and male prostitutes.

4.13 Certainly authors have justification in negatively approaching this population if that is the way pimps are presented to them; which is especially probable when the explanations are collected from prostitutes who have had negative experiences with pimps. It should also be noted that it seems former pimps themselves rarely offer flattering or glorifying images of who they are/were and/or what they do/did. The vast majority of research related to pimps suggested definitions based solely on the opinions of prostitutes who do and/or have worked with pimps. Other works have failed to obtain explanations of the word from the individuals who themselves fulfill the role and carry the title. Thus creating a context in which researchers are more likely to rely on descriptors and behaviors rather than roles and 'position.'

4.14 Hodgson's (1997) qualitative research on the pimp- prostitution relationship relies solely on a Canadian legal definition of pimp/pimping. His research cites Greenspan (1994: 207) defining pimping according to Canadian Criminal Code Section 212.(1):

'Every one who:
d) procures or attempts to procure a person to become, whether in or out of Canada, a prostitute,
(h) for the purpose of gain, exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in such a manner as to show that he is aiding, abetting or compelling that person to engage in or carry on prostitution with any person or generally,
(j) lives wholly or in part on the avails of prostitution of another person'

4.15 A legal definition allows for exploration within clear parameters and criteria but may be restrictive in that the definition offered could exclude broader understandings of the word, denies the population their culture representation and input, and furthermore, creates a rigid interpretation that leaves no room for adaptation or modification. Bernstein (2007) further suggests that 'legally speaking, a variety of different arrangements could conceivably come under the penal code's broad definition of pimps' (Bernstein 2007: 52-53) thus inappropriately including into the category of pimp those who would not by other definitions fit the word (Pheterson 1993). Additionally, the definition offered by Hodgson (1997) may be applicable to the Canadian context, but it is foreseeable that a legal Western description may not be applicable to all nations. And again, this definition is gender selective in implying gender 'to show that *he* is aiding abetting'.

4.16 By reviewing the work of other prostitution researchers, Faugier and Sargeant (1997) capture the complexities of defining 'pimp' based on the number of prostitutes working for an individual and the emotional and/or managerial relationship between the pimp and prostitute:

'Miller (1995) distinguishes between a 'man' and a pimp, according to the number of prostitutes they have. She then extends this to a continuum in which one extreme constitutes the pimp who manages a group of women in a relatively bureaucratic way, while the other signifies the husband or lover of the women. Barry (1995) agrees that there is a continuum between a pimp and 'a man', but highlights that the real question is the extent to which he is involved in a relationship with the prostitute and whether she is subjected to sexual exploitation *from him* and/ or *because of him*.' (Faugier & Sargeant 1997: 125)

4.17 Definitions of 'pimp' could vary based on the number of individuals working for someone, but as seen throughout this research, there are times when pimps only have one individual working for them and by most standards fit the definition of a pimp and still carried the title. Defining 'pimp' based on relationships is slippery as Pheterson (1993) highlights, because a person involved in prostitution with a romantic partner would not automatically equate to the partner being a pimp. Therefore, Barry (1995) highlights important points about the exact parameters of relationships that could be used to differentiate pimp from non-pimp. Thus a focus on the managerial and financial dependency of the relationship should be a major determinant and element in defining 'pimp.'

4.18 The definitions above were largely shaped without input from pimps themselves, and overall they lack of clear definitions for future research. Furthermore, gender bias, cultural focus and unquantifiable descriptions create a circumstance where 'pimp' is not only difficult to define in specifics but also one in which comparability across projects is unmanageable. Understanding the ways in which individuals define themselves is crucial to the development of a more panoramic, while also appropriately inclusive and appropriately exclusive, definition of the word. In the following section, detailed accounts of the definition of 'pimp' are offered by former/current pimps themselves.

'What does that mean to you? How do you define that? Pimp that is' Respondent Definitions

5.1 How I managed to mangle such a simple question still baffles me but on reflection, it was the first interview and I was in quite a fragile state by the end of my interview with Sue^[6]. She luckily offered a response that was shorter and 'cleaner' than previous responses during the course of the almost three hour interview:

Sue: Pimp? Paid in money and pussy.

Holly: Okay

Sue: Paid in money and pussy, it don't get no simpler than that.

5.2 And it did not. Other respondents offered explanations laden with far more depth and detail requiring intensive analysis. The varying interpretations of 'pimp' by the interviewees reflects the genuine diversity of experiences among those who make up this subculture. It also offers unique insight into what the respondents believed defined them during their time in The Game and what qualities made them who and/or what they were/are.

5.3 'How would you define pimp?' was the only question that was asked of all respondents in this research. Responses from interviewee varied depending on experience, gender, time spent in the Game and backgrounds of individuals. But even among the heterogeneity of responses, there was consistency in themes in their responses to this question. The following section explores the respondents' understandings and description of the word 'pimp'. These contributions are invaluable to the development of a more robust definition as they offer insight into the word as a title, role, lifestyle and persona as they have experienced first hand.

5.4 Marcus offered a brief but to the point definition: *'A leech. I was a parasite, I just took advantage of people's weaknesses.'* His response to the question surprised me quite a bit as it was exceptionally derogatory and frank. Ultimately, he described his former career in the underground as predatory and co-dependent, a trend which was repeated by most of the respondents. Furthermore, there are striking similarities between the socially parasitic behavior of pimps and biological models within the field of parasitism (Shelby 2002); Thus Marcus's choice of a parasitic creature to describe his behavior and role as a pimp carries profound meaning.

5.5 Aside from the awkwardness triggered by my inadvertently embarrassing Eric, his definition was largely descriptive and ascribed a personality type versus a role:

Holly: If I were to ask you for a definition of pimp what would you say? If you had to submit the next dictionary definition, what would it be?

Eric: Cunning, cunning that is what I would say.

Holly: So an adjective?

Eric: Yeah cunning

Holly: So as a noun, what would you define a pimp as?

Eric: A noun, you're going have to be more specific now, remember I am a street person

Holly: Noun is like a person, place or thing, so like if you defined a person who..., like a money manager or

Eric: Well, that's what it is a money manager, you have to have the gift of gab, you are not going to do well if you don't have the gift of gab, but you have to be cunning enough to have four or five different personalities in the house and not have any conflict.

5.6 When I asked Ken what a pimp was, he offered insight on the criminal career by normalizing the activities of the pimp and then further exploring the personality type required for this role.

A pimp is a entrepreneur, I don't know, someone with a 'I don't give a damn' attitude. Motherfucker determined to win, motherfucker that don't take no for an answer. Self drive a self starter. And this here too, cause a lot of pimps is full of themselves too, I know I was, I used to think there wasn't a female on earth I couldn't get. Very very conceited, very full of themselves, don't take no for an answer, driven, like running things, control freaks.

5.7 Ken expresses the characteristics necessary for a pimp and mainly focuses on ambition and control/domination as core themes. Control and domination regularly appear in pimps' descriptions of imperative 'job requirements'. This is relative not only to their ability to mentally manipulate and control others, but also to control their own emotions, presentation and even sex drive. Good pimping partially depends on an individual's ability to engage in strict emotional management and to consistently maintain a position of unquestioned power over others. This seizure of control back from women (pimps tend to believe that women control men in society through sex) and total domination over them is mandatory for success in The Game and is applied regardless of the gender of the pimp.

5.8 Until this point, all respondents have defined pimping in direct relation to prostitution. Michael was the only respondent who sought to extend the definition of pimp beyond The Game. He insisted that word could be applied to individuals (especially men) who fit specific criteria regardless of non-involvement in prostitution:

A pimp is someone who lives off of the sweat of a woman; the sweat and labor of woman, that is what a pimp is. If a guy stays in his house and his wife goes to work, that guy is pimpin'. Pimpin' ain't necessarily mean that the woman has got to be selling sex. That is what they say a pimp is, they are the procurer of the woman, that means he manages his woman that don't necessarily mean that she's got to be selling sex. You've got different types of whores, not all of them are having sex, there is a difference between a whore, a slut and a tramp. A whore is someone who asks for money for her services, a tramp is a girl that deals with different guys and a slut has sex with everyone and don't get nothin'. (Michael)

5.9 The idea that 'pimp' relies on gender roles is also echoed by pimp author Gholson (2001) who states that, 'Any man who accepts money from a female is a pimp, because no 'man' accepts money from females but pimps' (33). Pimps are then exempt from mainstream gender norms as the exceptional male as opposed to the normative male. Men in general society who then accept money from women or switch the traditional breadwinner model are pimps according to some.^[7] The tone and context in which this is discussed by those who subscribe to this definition of pimp, have a negative view of men who are supported by women outside of prostitution; dependency on women makes pimps more masculine while it acts to emasculate other men.

5.10 Sarah had experience as both a prostitute and now as a pimp; thus her definition of pimp encompasses multidimensional understanding of 'pimp':

A person that only really cares about himself, because the pimp I was with, be cared about money, jewelry, cars, they only care about themselves, they care about our health cause they have to and the way we look, we have to look good, keep their hair and nails done, and stuff like that and bills and if something comes up that need to be done, it's not that they are there to help us they are there to help themselves, it takes a long time for them to get to it, but if it affects them, they is quick to do what they need to do. (Sarah)

5.11 Her response is similar to the descriptions offered by the bulk of prostitution research; this likely because her definition, as the definitions offered by the latter, is informed by experiences of prostitutes' experiences of pimps. Even though Sarah is now pimping, she defines pimp from her understandings back when she was a prostitute. Furthermore, as a female pimp, Sarah still seeks to define pimps as male regardless of the fact that she herself is a female who pimps : *'a person that only really cares about himself.'* Also unlike other pimps who claim the title and refer to pimps in either the third person 'pimp/s' or we, Sarah strives for a disassociation in her consistent use of the word 'they' opposed to we. Clearly she still relates more to the prostitute role than her new one as a pimp. Additionally, her engagement with the word pimp indicated that she does pimp but does not identify as a pimp; pimping is something she does and is not what she is. It is not an identity she embraces fully. This is a direct contradiction to the other respondents who eagerly embraced calling themselves a pimp and self identified as such. Due to the social identification processes involved in pimping subcultures, one can fulfill the role of a pimp

without ever gaining the title. As found in this research, there is also the potential for individuals to be involved in pimping but refuse the title and do not seek to obtain it. Sarah is one example from this research who admitted that she 'helped girls out' for money, but adamantly refused to call herself a pimp. Likewise, Ken expressed that he pimped and was a pimp, but was not concerned with whether or not the streets or people recognized him as such. Ken tended to reject participation in the subculture of pimping he was peripherally involved in and as a result, he regularly was in violation of the 'codes' and 'rules' of The Game.

5.12 The streets are responsible for bestowing the title of 'pimp' to individuals. Pimps involved in illegal street level prostitution, as a subculture deeply entrenched in street culture, rely solely on the streets to achieve the position and name 'pimp'. Reinforcing the role of the street in naming pimps, one respondent (Eric) in this research explained, 'What it is, is that you have to have a certain status to be a pimp, you have to have a certain status to be known as a pimp, you can't just say 'hey, I'm pimpin.' Eric further indicates that 'The street names the pimps, the hos, the dope dealers, you know, just like that. It is the same way with a dope dealer, the dope dealer will get a status if he is a baller, a big time dope dealer. He didn't get that status just him being him, it's got to come from the product that he has and how strong you are in The Game, see you can't be no wimp and be no pimp.'

5.13 When I asked Sean 'Who is that decides when someone has become a pimp?' he replied 'Well I guess its something inside of you that lets you know in a sense that you have arrived so to speak, and then the streets, and other pimps, start to acknowledge, you can't just up one day and say 'I'm a pimp' and then be accepted like that, I guess it's kind of like ... they have to respect you and to see that I guess basically that you are pimpin' and know that you are a pimp.' So even though one can reject the title, one cannot just claim the title without actively pimping; the street and pimp community need to bestow it. Generally it can be assumed that titles and roles exist simultaneously, but this is not always the case, particularly not with this population.

5.14 Sean offered a definition that lead him to a lengthy explanation of his behavior and style of pimping compared to others. The following description offers insight into the insistence of respondents to continuously prove their skills in pimping and again, to offer an explanation of the type of personality required within the Game.

Well a pimp is a person, who I used to think had to be male, but and most pimps pretty much tell you the same thing that a pimp has to be a male but you do have some lady macks or whatever, but a pimp is a person that I know it might sound ugly, but it is what it is, a pimp is a person that pretty much preys on other people's weakness or abilities to basically produce whatever it is that that particular pimp wants and/or needs for himself. And they do it to where it would highly benefit themselves I tried to make it the way where also whoever was involved, the hooker, the prostitute, a working lady or whatever, a lot of pimps are selfish, greedy and they don't really care about nobody but themselves they would say to me you know 'you don't seem like no good pimp to me' 'you don't seem like some of these other people' and I tell em'' and I say what do you mean, first of all I am a pimp what do you mean I don't seem like a good pimp, I used to get offended, and I highly considered myself a good pimp and so I used to ask well what would make you say something like that, and they say ' because you don't seem you're not selfish and you're not greedy and I know that you care and that you care about people you just don't have the qualities of a person that I would consider to be a pimp.

And I said yeah if you put it like that, but regardless of what you want to believe or feel, I am still a pimp, it is still what I still what I do, I am a good pimp but when you put me down so I said that makes me a good pimp you know when you break it down, when they say what they say you just 'don't have the qualities of some I would consider to be a pimp' I can understand cause those kinds of characteristics of the typical pimp just ain't me (Sean)

5.15 Sean's definition differs from the others in that he insists his interaction with women 'improved' them 'where it would highly benefit themselves I tried to make it the way where also whoever was involved, the hooker, the prostitute.' He approaches the description as many before, as an explanation of characteristics needed, but goes beyond that through suggesting a behavioral moral superior to that of other pimps. He elaborates on his superior pimping skills and abilities to improve women: 'you know even though I had women prostituting, I was trying to increase their living standards to increase their knowledge upgrade their overall agenda everything, I guarantee you, any woman that has been with me, at least for a few weeks, a few months, a year, a couple years, something like that, she's a whole lot smarter when she left me than she was before she came. Some pimps they wanna keep their girls dumb, me I figured the smarter my women were the better off we would all be.'

5.16 It is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish why the definitions that most of the respondents offer are highly pejorative and self-deprecating. These definitions could represent a variety of circumstances: social desirability bias, an attempt to define themselves based on how they believe others view them, as explanations of what they think other pimps are, or it could be an uncensored response.^[8] Pimps as a population are far from naïve about public opinions on their activities. Their interviews clearly displayed a keen understanding of the judgment and stigma their career choices carry. Thus, it is possible that interviewees were simply giving answers they assumed I was after; in other words, their negative and condemning definitions may reflect a classic case of social desirability bias. But Sean's explanation of pimp above addresses the issue of how pimps define themselves and their skills in relation to others in The Game. Respondents and pimp authors alike tend to rely heavily on comparisons between their own methods and skills and those of other pimps. They strive to minimize audiences' condemnation by highlighting how much worse other pimps were and by asserting that the other pimps are the ones who

make pimping look bad. Thus it would appear at times that as in Sean's case, the negative descriptions of pimps could reflect their understanding of what other pimps are; but not of what they were as pimps. It is also possible that respondents offered definitions based on their positions as *former* pimps. This would assume that the individuals had, in their exit of pimping, began to fully embrace mainstream views on The Game. But this is highly unlikely as respondents frequently refer to involvement in The Game as 'being for life' and a mental state that one never fully leaves.

5.17 To the outsider, descriptions such as '*preys on other peoples weakness*', '*only really cares about himself*', '*I was a parasite, I just took advantage of people's weaknesses*', '*very full of themselves, don't take no for an answer, driven, like running things, control freaks*', may be detrimental to one's self perception but these ideas do not operate the same way in pimping subculture. As mentioned previously, these are expected expressions of masculinity and praised characteristics of a good pimp. A good example of this would be the consistent referral to taking advantage of others' weakness. When exploiting someone's weakness, there are two assumed actors: the one who is vulnerable, can be 'played', and is weak, whereas the other does not get manipulated, is strong (as in not weak) and is the dominant, in control one. Pimps would be the latter and therefore, their ability to dominate places them in a position of power and control which is highly esteemed social within this subculture.

5.18 Though Sean used to believe that pimps had to be male, he acknowledges the emergence and existence of female pimps. The inclusion of Sue and Sarah in this research, along with other conversations with respondents regarding 'lady macks', demonstrates that female pimps do exist and are active players within The Game outside of the role of prostitutes. It is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of pimps are male and the majority of prostitutes are female, but not to solely assert that pimps are male and prostitutes are female. Attention needs to be paid to the diversity in genders within the role of pimp however inconvenient it is to previous theoretical models related to prostitution. These variations in identity, gender and Game experience (pimping or prostituting) challenge many current research approaches to these populations and their inclusion is crucial to forming a panoramic reflection of sex work.

Conclusion

6.1 The descriptions of the roles, functions and definitions of pimps offered by Reitman in 1937, discussed at the start of this paper, differ only minimally from modern engagements and understandings. This supports two likely possibilities: 1) the study of the subject has yet to evolve or change in since the 1930's or 2) the trends and patterns of pimps have remained consistent since the 1930's. If pimps are still following the unwritten 'rules of The Game' which they commonly refer to, then it is possible that despite economic, racial, social, technological and media changes, The Game has remained relatively unchanged. But overall, pimps are exceptionally under-studied, and a combination of the small number of projects and the inaccessibility of the population, means that research approaches have been restricted; therefore, historical and current data and information on this population is restricted (Weitzer 2000). Despite this, some shifts have occurred that need to be acknowledged within definitions of pimps; mainly regarding gender, and media exposure. Thus adjustments should be made to the ways in which researchers define the term. The operationalization of the term may shift based on the research context and the researcher, but the definitions should become more consistent and concise.

6.2 Based on the literature and data discussed throughout this paper, the following criteria were set to formulate a new definition of 'pimp':

- Exclusion of personalities descriptions and behavioral characteristics
- Gender neutral language ('most pimps pretty much tell you the same thing that a pimp has to be a male but you do have some lady macks'- Sean; 'Pimping is aggressive and if that makes it male, then pimping is male'- Sue). This is not to undermine the overwhelming trend of pimps as male and prostitutes as female, but to acknowledge that these roles can be filled by other genders. Limited research on female pimps and male prostitutes restricts current knowledge of these groups but they do exist and represent an active minority within sex work. (Weitzer 2000)
- Acknowledges the gain is financial and that they control income earned and general activities; employment and otherwise ('Paid in money' – Sue, 'they are the procurer of the woman, that means he manages his woman'- Michael)
- A definition which limits influence from mainstream understandings of the word to one which sets strict parameters as to what specific underground career and role is being discussed and in what context.

6.3 In the application of the above stated considerations, minor but still important changes have been made to the original research definition which read: an individual (male or female) that controls the lives and proceeds of one or more women working in prostitution (Giobbe 1993: Williamson & Cluse-Tolar 2002). The new definition proposed is as follows: An individual who financially profits from, and manages the activities and income of, one or more individuals involved in prostitution.

6.4 The inclusion of more feedback from the definitions offered by respondents would be ideal, but it would prove difficult and problematic to incorporate characteristics such as cunning, aggressive, self driven, etc... into a researchable definition. In other words, how would a researcher proceed to decide whether or not an individual is cunning or aggressive enough to be a pimp? Therefore, the new definition has taken into consideration the contributions that allow for a consistent and 'quantifiable' research definition of pimp as informed by multiple sources, mainly academic definitions, and respondent explorations.

6.5 The origins of the word pimp remain relatively elusive but current trends and changes in its use

indicate a cultural adoption of the term with several meanings and usage. The terms movement from a pejorative association with an illegal criminal career in pandering to items/people that are trendy, cool and flamboyant, highlights the evolution words can experience within the mainstream once adopted. These trends and changes become relevant to social researchers who investigate pimp populations as the many uses of the word can easily fog public and peer understandings of the social phenomena being explored. It is therefore imperative for researchers to filter through cultural usage and assumptions to appropriately identify the action, role, and/or individuals include in their use of the term 'pimp'.

6.6 The problematic inclusion of cultural characteristics, gender assumptions and assumed roles/behaviors have collectively lead to definitions which simultaneously include and exclude individuals from research samples. In engaging with elements of academic research and feedback from individuals within the population, it is possible to create a more comprehensive definition. Increasing the comparability of research on this topic could go a long way to increase cohesion in the rapidly expanding research on prostitution within various disciplines. It could also lead to more specific identification of the various types of pimps allowing for more appropriate distinction between subpopulations. The current body of academic literature and research on pimps is exceptionally limited and is in critical need of more active academic investigation with special focus on the heterogeneity of the worlds of 'sex work' (Weitzer 2000). The hidden, illegal and demanding nature of pimping populations makes access challenging, but the voices of these individuals and their experiences are crucial to understanding prostitution and illegal criminal careers more fully.

6.7 This paper sought to grapple with the complications inherent in trying to define a diverse, heterogeneous population within social research projects and the appropriate sources to rely on in order to do so. The suggested criteria and overview of definitions throughout various literatures highlights issues that are relevant to consider when trying to conceptualize these populations. Given the already emerging problematic trends within a limited body of research on pimps, it would be ideal for future research to attempt to correct these issues by paying close attention to the ways in which they define and identify these populations.

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Notes

¹I am thankful to both Dr. Lynn Jamieson and an anonymous reviewer for the SRO for the suggested use of the terms 'inappropriate' and/or false inclusion/exclusion.

²street slang term for pimp, not utilized by respondents in this project.

³It is crucial to note that the use of Milner and Milner (1972) as a robust and valid source of academic literature is done so with caution. Their work involves many problematic ethical issues, such as lack of consent and confidentiality. Interviewed after the research, Iceberg Slim was interviewed by Richard Milner who then allowed for that interview to be integrated into the book *Black Players* without the knowledge of Iceberg Slim. About this Milner states 'There's no denying that we conned him into becoming one of our informants in *Black Players* under the guise of promoting his own books. I confess I derived a guilty pleasure in having tricked the king of tricksters' (Milner 2009: 154) Also, the assertion in the text that Iceberg Slim was interviewed in the field, was claimed to be interviewed by someone who did not interview and was included in the research, calls into question whether or not other encounters, interviews or experiences occurred or were similarly fabricated.

⁴I had been spotted driving around the city at night in Cadillacs, snorting drugs with black pimps. When he pointedly inquired whether that was my idea of fieldwork, I replied it was.' (Milner 2009:150)

⁵Pheterson (1993) provides a footnote for her definition above which is worth mention; the reference indicates 'In Marxist terms, an unemployed wife in a capitalist society is also a pimp in that she lives off the earnings of her husband's alienated labor' (p 61). Review of Engel's writing in *Origins* would offer an alternate perspective that the shift to the nuclear family as an economic unit trapped and oppressed women through the separation of the public and private spheres. Overall, his analysis would contend that housewives under capitalist systems are far better represented in the role of prostitutes than pimps. A sentiment and view shared by pimp authors as well : 'The average marriage is only a form of prostitution (Gholson 2001: 59)'.

⁶The names of all respondents have been changed to protect anonymity.

⁷Traces of this understanding of the word can be seen throughout cultural usage of the term.

⁸'uncensored response' is meant to represent an answer that is not part of the performative pimp role or does not assume the characteristics of pimps' raps as pimps have been regularly charged as a group unable to divulge the 'truth', the assumption in this paper is that they can and that they are no more or

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