

# **ACCOUNTING FOR PORNOGRAPHY, PROSTITUTION AND PATRIARCHY**

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**DEDICATION**

For Andrea Dworkin

For Mum

Radical feminists

Freedom fighters both

And for Mummy Gladys

Who showed us

That love

Can survive anything

And is greater than anything

Even the terrorism of male-supremacist conditions

## **ABSTRACT**

We live in a male-supremacist society. Under it, women are sexually colonized, are treated as sexual and reproductive chattel. Under it, women are subjected to a female sexual slavery that is at the core of patriarchy's heart of darkness. Under it, women are subjected to epidemic level of male violence, male sexual violence and abuse. It is a rape culture. It is a woman-hating culture. Pornography and prostitution are key institutions of woman-hating: as male-supremacist sexual practices, they enact and enforce the subordination of women, they reproduce the violence on which male dominance is based, they reduce women to "cunt," and they eroticize male dominance. Today, they aren't marginal institutions; instead, they are part of a massive global sexual-exploitation industry that is global in reach, that is expanding into more and more areas of social life, and that is reproducing the harms associated with prostitution and pornography on a staggering scale. Accounting as a fundamental organizational and social practice is clearly playing a role in this expansionary process of the sexual-exploitation industry's globalization and reach, and yet, we have very little if not any discussion of this global sexual-exploitation industry in accounting research. There is a profound "silence" around it in accounting research. This includes critical accounting research.

This isn't an accident. It isn't an accident because it reflects the wider "backlash" against feminism, and in particular radical feminism, that male-supremacist forces have carried out as a reaction to the powerful women's movement that arose through the so-called feminist second wave. It reflects the normalization of pornography and prostitution and their integration into popular culture, into mainstream business, and into everyday life.

This "silence" is unacceptable for a research field that purports to serve the public interest. It is unacceptable for a field that aims at social emancipation and radical transformation. And it is unacceptable for a field that claims to be grounded in moral and ethical positions that hold as central the inherent dignity and equality of all human beings and the values of freedom, equality, compassion, and love. This paper suggests that the way to address this lacuna is to make radical feminism central to accounting research. It explores how radical feminism could be used to make sense of prostitution and pornography. It explores the potential role that accounting could be playing the globalization of the sexual-exploitation industry. And it explores the implications that radical feminism might hold for re-thinking the theory, research themes, and politics of accounting research. It argues that radical feminism not only holds the key to making sense of pornography and prostitution, it also enables us to radicalize our politics and to deepen the normative visions that would inform and enrich our work. Radical feminist politics is revolutionary politics. It is politics aimed at the abolition of "sex," the abolition of "gender" itself. The vision they point to is a world without submission and dominance as the organizing principles of social life. The vision they point to is a world whereby it is equality rather than inequality that is eroticized, affirmed, and held as the motivating dynamic behind human desires, and sexual and aesthetic drives. They point to a world without rape. It is my hope that this paper makes a small contribution to creating an accounting literature in which this abolitionist revolutionary politics and this radical vision can have a home, a place, a space.

"I have thought a great deal about how a feminist, like myself, addresses an audience primarily of political men who say that they are antisexist. And I thought a lot about whether there should be a qualitative difference in the kind of speech I address to you. And then I found myself incapable of pretending that I really believe that that qualitative difference exists. I have watched the men's movement for many years. I am close with some of the people who participate in it. I can't come here as a friend even though I might very much want to. What I would like to do is scream: and in that scream I would have the screams of the raped, and the sobs of the battered; and even worse, the deafening sound of women's silence, that silence into which we are born because we are women and in which most of us die.

And if there would be a plea or a question or a human address in that scream, it would be this: why are you so slow? Why are you so slow to understand the simplest things; not the complicated ideological things. You understand those. *The simple things*.

The clichés. Simply that women are human to precisely the degree and quality that you are...

I don't believe rape is inevitable or natural. If I did, my political practice would be different from what it is. Have you ever wondered why we [women] are not just in armed combat against you? It's not because there's a shortage of kitchen knives in this country. It is because we believe in your humanity, against all the evidence."

(Andrea Dworkin, "I Want A Twenty-Four-Hour Truce During Which There Is No Rape," speech given to a group of men at the Midwest Regional Conference of the National Organization for Changing Men, 1983, St Paul, Minnesota, in Dworkin, 1988, p. 163, 169-170)

## INTRODUCTION: THE “DEEP SILENCE”

“...sometimes when we talk about “breaking the silence,” people conceptualize “the silence” as being superficial – there is talk – chatter, really – and laid over the talk there is a superficial level of silence that has to do with manners or politeness.

Women are indeed taught to be seen and not heard. But I am talking about a deep silence: a silence that goes to the heart of tyranny, its nature. There is a tyranny that preordains not only who can say what but what women especially can say. There is a tyranny that determines who cannot say anything, a tyranny in which people are kept from being able to say the most important things about what life is like for them. That is the kind of tyranny I mean.

The political systems that we live in are based on this deep silence. They are based on what we have not said. In particular, they are built on what women – women in every racial group, in every class, including the most privileged – have not said. The assumptions underlying our political systems are also based on what women have not said. Our ideas of democracy and equality – ideas that men have had, ideas that express what men think equality and democracy are – evolved absent the voices, the experiences, the lives, the realities of women. The principles of freedom that we hear enunciated as truisms are principles that were arrived at despite this deep silence: without our participation. We are all supposed to share and take for granted the commonplace ideas that are based on our silence. What passes as normal in life is based on this same silence. Gender itself – what men are, what women are – is based on the forced silence of women; and beliefs about community – what a community should be – are based on this silence. Societies have been organized to maintain the silence of women – which suggests that we cannot break this deep silence without changing the ways in which societies are organized.”

(Dworkin, “Remember, Resist, Do Not Comply,” 1995, pp. 169-170, in Dworkin, 1997)

Feminists have this term, “breaking the silence.” It is a beautiful term, a courageous term, empowering and dignifying because it refers to the practice of oppressed people speaking out against the system of domination that subordinates them and that depends on their silence in order to legitimate the subordination that it is based on and to perpetuate its unequal social structures. It refers to the practice of breaking the silence that all oppressive systems have to be based on: the silence of subordinated groups about the necessary violence, subjugation and exclusion that has to be visited upon them by the dominant group in order to enact and enforce their subordinate status; and the silence of dominant groups about the illegitimacy of the social system on which their powers and privileges are based on because of the way that it is based on domination – a domination that is based on precisely the practices of violence, subjugation and exclusion that they have to carry out against subordinated groups in order to ensure and perpetuate their dominance over these subordinated groups.

The silence that feminists focus on is the silence of male-supremacist culture<sup>1</sup>: on the one hand, the silence of women, produced by the violence, abuse, repression, marginalization and exclusion that men visit upon them in order to keep them the subordinated sex class of male-supremacist culture and men on top; on the other hand, the silence of men about this state of affairs: about the illegitimacy of male-supremacy, about the ways it confers certain powers and privileges upon us, and about the practices of violence, abuse, repression, marginalization and exclusion we engage in, in order to enforce the subjugation of women and their role in enacting and enforcing the subordination and silencing of women.

Andrea Dworkin, one of the foremothers of the so-called feminist ‘Second Wave’<sup>2</sup> and a writer that I consider front rank amongst all the great radical thinkers to

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<sup>1</sup> My use of the term “male supremacy” rather than “patriarchy” to characterise the gendered social system we live within is intentional. I’ve chosen to use it because it does a better job of calling attention to who the dominant group is and the illegitimate nature of its power relation with the subordinated group because of the associations the term has with “white supremacy.” It is a power relation based on a fascist rationality (Dworkin, 1997). And it is a power relation that unequivocally requires the systematic practice of ubiquitous and habitual violence and abuse against women, the subordinated group under male supremacy (Dworkin, 1988). As John Stoltenberg argues (Stoltenberg, 1989, p. 41), “Male supremacy is the honest term for what is sometimes hedgingly called patriarchy.”

<sup>2</sup> The “Second Wave” refers to one of the great mobilizations of the women’s movement and feminist movement during the political ferments of the 60s and 70s. I’ve placed this term in scare quotes, however, because, like Robin Morgan, I think it’s misleading in suggesting that, at that point in time, this was only the second instance of feminist uprising against sexism and male-supremacy. I’m more of

have ever walked the face of the earth, in her writings often spoke of, and against, this silence (Dworkin, 1988, 1996, 1997).<sup>3</sup> In the quote above, taken from her book *Letters from a War Zone* (1988), she refers to this silence as “a deep silence.” The silence is deep because it is not trivial. It is not trivial because it is a silence that is institutionalized and embedded in the very cultural fabric of social life. It is also non-trivial because it is based on certain forms of terrorism, systematic terrorism; the tyranny of male dominance. It is a silence produced by the institutionalized violence of male supremacy; a violence that men visit against women; a violence that functions to produce inequality, to produce exclusion, and to produce silence. In the quote directly above, Andrea explains that this silence affects all our institutions, all our ideas, all our modes of thought. It is a silence that is deep, systematic, and ubiquitous; born from women’s oppression; based on their subordination under the hegemonic culture of male supremacy: the normal existential background that provides the socio-political context for the foreground, the very warp and woof, of everyday life.

### **ECHOES OF THE “DEEP SILENCE” IN ACCOUNTING RESEARCH**

Academia is not insulated from this sexual politics of silence. While it is often thought of as an intellectual space that allows for the free and open discussion of ideas, it is not an isolated haven. It is part of wider society, it partakes in the reproduction of its unequal political structures, and it mediates the associated social conflicts and struggles that these inequalities produce (Tinker, Merino and Neimark, 1982; Tinker, 1991; Lehman and Tinker, 1987).<sup>4</sup> I would argue, further, that there are echoes of this “deep silence” in accounting, and even critical accounting, research. While there are many ways in which this silence manifests itself, and is present, in accounting research, the ones that I want to identify and discuss have to do with how feminism is devalued and marginalized in the literature.<sup>5</sup>

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the view that ever since patriarchy arose and became established or institutionalized over 3000 years ago, women have resisted, fought back, clawed back, tooth and nail for their freedom (Morgan, 1989). Whenever there has been oppression, oppressed people have resisted – and continue to resist.

<sup>3</sup> Andrea Dworkin is one of founding mothers of the so-called feminist “Second Wave.” She is also one of its most publicly reviled and misrepresented thinkers. Much of this antagonism against her was because she refused to adopt in her writings the classically feminine pose of deference to male power. Instead, her writings entail a radical critique of male supremacy that is hard to match in terms of its breadth and depth. Her writings, and the analyses within them, are rarely matched for their searing incisiveness, brutal honesty, fearlessness, and compassion. As Ariel Levy put it, “she had a voice like no other.” For this reason, I consider her front rank amongst all the great radical thinkers who have ever lived. Gloria Steinem once said that, “Every century, there are a handful of writers who help the human race to evolve. Andrea is one of them.” It is a quote that succinctly expresses Dworkin’s stature as a writer, as feminist activist, and as a humanist. She is now listed in the Encyclopedia Britannica’s “Guide to Women’s History” among the “Top 300 Women who Changed the World”.

<sup>4</sup> If society as a whole is based on this silence, then accounting research itself can’t be exempt. As critical research on accounting has shown, rather than being insulated from wider society, the dominant trend of academic scholarship is to reflect and legitimate the interests, concerns, and perspectives of dominant social groups (Tinker, 1980; Merino and Neimark, 1982; Tinker, 1984, 1985; Hopper et al, 1986; Armstrong, 1985, 1987; Neu, 2001). Critical research has shown, for example, that mainstream accounting research typically privileges the interests of capital and takes existing institutional and market arrangements for granted (Tinker et al, 1982; Chua, 1986; Williams); overlooks the concerns of the majority world by privileging the interests and concerns of dominant interests from countries of the centre (Neu, 2001); and is typically structured by a philosophical and political frameworks that have their foundations in phallogocentric worldviews that legitimate patriarchal (male-supremacist) culture (Hines, 1992; Cooper, 1992; Cooper et al, 1992; Shearer and Arrington, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> This marginalization of feminism is a manifestation of the “deep silence” that Dworkin speaks about because it has been this radical and progressive social movement that, more than any other, that has

The first and most common way in which feminism is marginalized or silenced in the literature is simply by it being written out, erased and ignored. David Moore pointed to this erasure by noting that of the 3460 articles that were published in the four leading accounting journals between 1971 and 1990, not one of them included the terms “feminist” or “feminism” in the title or abstract. This null set doesn’t just confirm Miller and O’Leary’s (1987) claim that accounting has remained “remarkably insulated” from post-modern intellectual developments; it also means, more to the point, that none of the scholarship in that time saw any connection between accounting and the patriarchal sexual (and sexist) organization on which society is based or, for that matter, saw fit to draw on the philosophical and social movement that has done the most in calling attention to its atrocities and fighting against it. Not much has changed since then. Most of what makes up mainstream accounting research<sup>6</sup> continues to ignore feminism as the philosophical tradition from which to theoretically inform research and the political issues that it seeks to place on the research agenda. Since Moore’s observation, however, there has been a growth in mainstream feminist accounting research to the point where it now makes up a significant body work (see, for example, Pillsbury et al, 1989; Silverstone, 1990; Weisel, 1991; Burke & McKeenan, 1992; Hooks, 1992; Barker & Tonks, 1992; Neale, 1995; Barker & Monks, 1995; Paisey & Paisey, 1995). This mainstream feminist accounting research, however, deradicalizes feminist insights by interpreting issues of gender through what is essentially a liberal pluralist lens (Gallhofer, 1998; Shearer and Arrington, 1993). As Sonja Gallhofer points out, in her 1998 article, “The silences of mainstream feminist accounting research,” this liberal feminist framework fails to challenge structural inequalities based on race, class, and culture, and focuses more on integration and incorporation into the dominant social order rather than its radical transformation” (Gallhofer, 1998). In this sense, feminist insights – radical feminist insights – are marginalized through the literature’s imposition of a dominant theoretical framework – that of liberal pluralism – that is itself not subjected to critical scrutiny for “academic capture” (Everett, 2007; see also, Everett, 2004).

Within the critical accounting literature, the marginalization of feminism plays itself out in different ways because, in this particular literary field, feminist accounting research, interpreted broadly, actually has a place, is recognized, acknowledged, encouraged, and promoted in various ways<sup>7</sup> such as devoting issues and Special Issues to the subject (see for example, AOS, 1992; AAAJ, 1998, 2008). One of the ways in which feminism is marginalized in the critical accounting literature that I would like to call attention to is the *implicit sexual division of labour* that appears to structure the critical accounting research field in terms of those who do feminist research and those who don’t. This comes through clearly once we consider the gender demographics of those who work in the field of feminist accounting

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placed the emancipatory interests of women on the political agenda and insisted that social liberation is a lie, is impossible, if it were not accompanied by a thoroughgoing transformation of the relations that hold between women and men and the abolition of sexism itself.

<sup>6</sup> Mainstream accounting research is accounting research underpinned by positivistic philosophy, the hypothetico-deductive model of social science, and the liberalist theories of neoclassical economics, utilitarianism, and agency theory (Chua, 1986). This is the dominant research paradigm in accounting research (Neu, 2001; Williams, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> For a sample of this critical feminist accounting literature, see, for example, Cooper, (1992a, b, 2001); Cooper et al (1992); Ciancanelli (1992); Welsh, (1992); James (1992); Hammond (1992; 1997a, b, 2003); Hammond and Preston (1992); Hammond and Oakes (1992); Oakes and Hammond (1995); Hines (1992); Gallhofer (1992, 1998); McNicholas et al (2004); Broadbent and Kirkham (2008); Haynes (2008a, b); Komori (2007, 2008); Dambrin and Lambert (2008); Cooper and Taylor (2000).

research against those who work in the field of critical accounting research more widely but who do not incorporate feminist perspectives or deal with issues of gender in their academic or scholarly work. Why is it that despite the ground-breaking work of feminist accounting research (see, for example, the Special Issue of *Accounting Auditing & Accountability Journal* in 1992), not only had this early work not been built on and replicated as Broadbent and Kirkham (2008) have rightly noted, but also, why do the researchers in this small yet very important field *continue to overwhelmingly be women*? Why aren't there *more men* doing feminist accounting research? If we were to pick out a sample of papers from those ground-breaking Special Issues on gender and accounting up to the present – (see, for example, Cooper, 1992a, b, 2001; Ciancanelli, 1992; Welsh, 1992; James, 1992; Hammond, 1992; 1997a, b, 2003; Hammond and Preston, 1992; Hammond and Oakes, 1992; Oakes and Hammond, 1995; Hines, 1992; Gallhofer, 1992, 1998; McNicholas et al, 2004; Broadbent and Kirkham, 2008; Haynes, 2008a, b; Komori, 2007, 2008; Dambrin and Lambert, 2008; Cooper and Taylor, 2000) – it is notable just how much of this very important work is, with a few exceptions, overwhelmingly carried out by women and just how much men are absent from it...<sup>8</sup>

Another somewhat subtle way in which feminism is marginalized in the critical accounting literature is by considering the exclusions produced by patterns of theorist selection.<sup>9</sup> As a general rule, the most popular theorists that critical accounting scholars would appear to cite would appear to be male theorists – and, in particular, dead white European male theorists (Marx, Foucault, Bourdieu, Baudrillard, Freire, Levinas, etc.). Perhaps more to the point the theorists that *male* critical accounting scholars would seem to cite tend to be male theorists – and, in particular, dead white European male theorists. This isn't to say that what these theorists have to say is of no value (they are, of course); my point is more that, given the fact that the major theorists and writers within the feminist tradition have not been men, but women, this male theorist bias clearly predisposes scholars to adopting theoretical perspectives in which feminism and feminist issues are not central, and even more problematically, that might actually be based on patriarchal values and reinforce misogynistic attitudes.

Another subtle way in which feminism is marginalized in the critical accounting literature, still staying with patterns of theorist selection – and this is the final way in which the literature marginalizes feminism that I want to discuss (though by no means is this a comprehensive list) – is through the deradicalization produced by established patterns of *feminist* theorist selection: that is, the patterns which emerge if we consider the feminist theorists who have been cited and used in the critical accounting canon against those which have been overlooked. Which feminist theorists would appear central to the canon and which are deemed marginal or excluded altogether? If this pattern were considered, it is notable the extent to which *radical feminist* voices – the voices of feminist thinkers such as Andrea Dworkin, Sheila Jeffries, Kate Millett, Mary Daly, Janice Raymond, Viola Klein, Adrienne Rich, Catherine MacKinnon, Ariel Levy, Gail Dines, Robert Jensen, Kathleen Barry, Susan Griffin, Marilyn Frye and Robin Morgan, for instance – are largely absent from the critical accounting canon. There are relatively few articles that cite these writers in the opening quotes of articles or the major sections of articles; there are relatively few articles which cite their work; and there are relatively few articles that choose to adopt radical feminist

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<sup>8</sup> I realize that I've cited notable exceptions here too – for instance, Tony Puxty, and Ed Arrington – but they are, as they say, the exceptions that only prove the rule.

<sup>9</sup> Everett (2004) has made the point that theory selection and methodology choice have to be the objects of critical reflexivity in any critical research project.

perspectives as the methodological frames for conducting the analysis, critique and discussion of accounting, organizations and society. This erasure of radical feminism in critical accounting research might not be intentional, but it isn't accidental because it merely reflects wider attacks that malestream interests have launched against radical feminist thinkers. On the one hand, as part of the wider institutional "backlash" against feminism by malestream interests (Faludi, 1992), radical feminists have been attacked by men from both the left and the right (right-wing religious fundamentalist men, left-wing sexual liberal men), the pro-prostitution and pro-pornography lobby groups that serve as the mouthpieces for the sexual exploitation industries, and the wider malestream media.<sup>10</sup> The marginalization of radical feminism "in here," then, is simply reflective of radical feminism's marginalization "out there." Moreover, radical feminists have also been attacked within the feminist movement itself, in what came to be called "the sex wars" or the "sexuality debates," by liberal feminists who had chosen to align themselves with male-supremacist interests by moving away from many of the radical critiques of sexism and patriarchal culture put forward by radical feminist thinkers that made – and continues to make – feminism such a radical and emancipatory social movement (Jeffreys, 1990a, b, 1993, 1994, 1997a, b, 2003, 2004, 2005).<sup>11</sup> This has resulted in liberal feminism becoming the dominant viewpoint within the feminist movement – an important marker of which is the extent to which radical feminist voices have been struck out of women's studies courses and gender studies courses in many universities. In this sense, radical feminist voices are silenced "in here" just as they're repressed and written out of the feminist canon "out there" (Faludi, 1992; Levy, 2006).<sup>12</sup> This absence of radical feminist thinkers from the critical accounting canon is an important marker of the "deep silence" within critical accounting research because it has been radical feminism, of all the sub-traditions within the feminist movement, that has most consistently called attention to the atrocities – the violence and the sexualized nature of the violence (battering, incest, rape, etc.) – that are fundamental to the condition of women under male supremacist culture. It has been radical feminism most of all that has done what Robin Morgan called the "atrocious work" (Dworkin, 1988); the feminist work of critically analyzing and calling attention to the ways in which male supremacy is predicated on violence and on the *sexualized* nature of much of this violence (Millett, 1977; MacKinnon, 1989); Dworkin, 1981).<sup>13</sup> It was radical feminism that showed how our society is male supremacist. It was radical feminism that showed how gender – the sex class system – is oppressive because it is necessarily based on relations of domination and subordination, in which men have to dominate and control women in order to be "men"

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<sup>10</sup> Of all the sub-traditions within the feminist movement, radical feminism has been the one that has been most subjected to attack by the malestream interests of right-wing religious fundamentalist groups, the left-wing sexual liberal men, and the pro-prostitution and pro-pornography lobby groups that serve as the mouthpieces for the sexual exploitation industries.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this systematic silencing of radical feminist voices, both in the wider culture and in the feminist movement itself, listen to this podcast: <http://rabble.ca/podcasts/shows/word/2011/04/where-have-all-radicals-gone-when-feminism-gets-moderate>. See also, Levy (2006).

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<sup>13</sup> As a social critique, "feminism" is an analysis of the ways in which women are oppressed as a class in this society – the ways in which men hold more power, and how those differences in power systematically disadvantage women in the public and private sphere; "radical feminism" as social critique is the analysis of the ways that in this patriarchal system in which we live, one of the key sites of this oppression – and a key method of domination – is sexuality (Jensen, 2007, p. 29). As a political project and practice, feminism is the struggle to challenge and abolish sexism (hooks, 2000).

and for women to be subordinated to men in order to be “women.” It was radical feminism that called attention to the political nature of battery, rape, incest, and other forms of sexual abuse in maintaining and enforcing male dominance. And it was radical feminism that called attention to and saw the necessity in challenging all of the institutions that serve to maintain rape culture and through which male dominance is normalized, legitimated and enforced (Millett, 1977; Dworkin, 1988; Jeffreys, 2004). In doing so, radical feminism developed radical critiques of capitalism and class dominance, imperialism and colonialism, white supremacy and racism, and patriarchy and sexism in line with radical traditions of left-wing thought, and also developed these further by looking at how sexuality might be the site of sexist oppression and male dominance (Millett, 1972; Dworkin, 1983). And because they did so, they also developed radical critiques of institutions such as conventional beauty practices, fashion, romantic love, marriage, and the sexual-exploitation industries – particularly prostitution and pornography – by pointing out their basis in women’s oppression by men (Millett, 1972; Dworkin, 1983; Jeffries, 1997, 2000b, 2005, 2009).

One of the direct and most important consequences of the marginalization or erasure of radical feminism from the critical accounting literature and the accounting literature more broadly is that the political issues and social problems that radical feminist thinkers have called attention to are largely overlooked and ignored in the literature along with the critical analyses that radical feminist scholars and writers have deployed to make sense of them. Perhaps the most tell-tale sign that points to and is emblematic of this oversight is the fact that pornography, prostitution, and other institutions of the sexual-exploitation industries have not been of much concern to critical accounting scholars. Radical feminists such as Kate Millett, Andrea Dworkin, and Catherine MacKinnon pointed out and analyzed the ways in which pornography and prostitution functioned socially as institutional props for male supremacy and subjected these institutions to swingeing critiques, and in the 1970s and early 80s when anti-pornography and anti-prostitution feminism were at their height, such critiques were central to feminist politics.<sup>14</sup> However, following the ‘sex wars’ or ‘sex debates’ within the feminist movement that saw radical feminist views marginalized and vilified as “anti-sex” and pro-pornography and pro-prostitution ‘feminism’ gain ascendancy and popularity as the sexual exploitation sectors themselves expanded under neo-liberal regimes worldwide becoming more industrialized and more and more integrated into mainstream culture, such critiques have been silenced, repressed, and overlooked both in the mainstream of popular culture and left-wing scholarship as well (see Jeffreys, 1987, 1990/91, 1997, 2009 for critical accounts of these ‘sex debates’ or ‘sex wars’). The critical accounting literature echoes this silencing. Why has there been Special Issues on just about every political topic imaginable from climate change, the GFC, indigenous peoples, subalterns, and so forth, but none on the issues of “Pornography, Prostitution, and Patriarchy” when the global sexual exploitation industry is enjoying unprecedented levels of profits, expansion, and social legitimacy and when the values of pornography and prostitution are becoming more entrenched and integrated into everyday life (Jeffreys, 2009; Levy, 2006; Dines, 2010)? Why have critical accounting scholars not been very concerned about pornification of sexuality and the increasing expansion of the global sex trade when its industries are producing

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<sup>14</sup> In fact, there is a long history of pornography and prostitution being targets of swingeing feminist critiques because of the way that are intrinsically based on male dominance or the subordination of women by men (See Jeffreys, 1997, 2009 and Long, 2012).

incredible abuses and promoting highly destructive and harmful cultural practices – mostly against women and children (Jeffries, 1997, 2008) – when clearly, if accounting is seen as a social practice (Lehman and Tinker, 1987; Everett, 2003), and is central to modern business organizational functioning, accounting *has* to be having some sort of role in this process of industrialization, commodification, capital accumulation, and global economic expansion that the sexual-exploitation industries are currently enjoying?

My suggestion is that these subjects have been avoided in critical accounting research because it is a research field that has also been affected by wider socio-historical developments – historical developments that have seen, on the one hand, the systematic silencing of “radical feminist” voices, and, on the other, the increasing integration of the pornography, prostitution and other sexual exploitation industries into the “mainstream” (or malestream) of social life. These two developments (the marginalization of radical feminism and the growth of the sexual exploitation industry) aren’t coincidental to each other. They are directly related. And this is because it has been radical feminism that has produced the most forceful and incisive critiques of pornography and prostitution as key institutions of male dominance under patriarchal culture. That critical accounting research has thus far overlooked critiquing pornography, prostitution and the rest of the sexual-exploitation industries suggest that it has thus unreflectively aligned with the way in which pornography and prostitution have become normalized in mainstream popular culture and increasingly integrated into everyday life.

In light of all this, this paper is a corrective. Drawing on radical feminism, this paper undertakes a critical discussion of the nature of pornography, prostitution and other aspects of the sexual-exploitation industry; it undertakes an exploration of the role that accounting might be playing in facilitating the legitimation, expansion, and perpetuation of this industry; and it discusses some of the implications that radical feminism might pose for re-thinking the direction of the critical accounting research. By doing so, I see this paper as making a contribution to radical feminist accounting research that earlier scholars have begun. Its objective is six-fold: to give more visibility to radical feminism in the accounting literature; to call on accounting scholars to critically look into the interconnections between accounting and the sexual-exploitation industry (and patriarchy more widely); to encourage critical accounting scholars to draw on radical feminism to inform their research; to argue for making feminism central – indispensable – to the critical accounting project; and to offer an analytical framework and a critical overview as a starting-point for doing all this. The final objective is a “self-reflexive” one (Everett, 2004, 2007): as a male scholar, I want to use this opportunity to reflexively explore the issues that *male* critical accounting scholars might need to do if we want to make feminism more central to our research praxis.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section of the paper introduces key terms and outlines what feminism and radical feminism mean to me. The second section of the paper develops a radical feminist critique of society, focussing on its patriarchal or male-supremacist nature and the role that pornography and prostitution play within it as institutional bastions of enforcing male dominance and the subordination of women. I discuss here the radical feminist critique of pornography and prostitution, outlining the social functioning of these institutions within the wider context of male supremacist culture. The third section outlines the nature of pornography and prostitution today, focussing on its historical emergence and expansion, its industrial nature and globalization, its integration into mainstream

media and popular culture, and the role of the neoliberal State in its legitimation and promotion. The fourth section offers a framework for exploring and making sense of the possible roles that accounting might be currently playing in the socio-economic legitimation, expansion and reproduction of pornography, prostitution and the sexual-exploitation industry more widely. The fifth section closes by exploring and discussing some of the implications that the paper, and radical feminism more widely, might have in terms of re-thinking critical accounting research and praxis.

# FEMINISM AND RADICAL FEMINISM

“Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.”  
(hooks, 2000b, p. 1)

“Feminism is for everybody”  
(bell hooks, 2000b, title)

“...there will be no freedom or peace until we, women, are free to determine for ourselves the integrity and boundaries of our own bodies, the uses to which we will put our own bodies – that is, until we have absolute reproductive freedom and until the crimes of sexual violence against us by men are ended.

If these revolutionary necessities are not our first priority, we will be led down the garden path and into the sunset by seducers and pimps of all persuasions who will do what they have always done – pillage our bodies, steal our labour, and bury us in unmarked graves under the weeds of centuries of contempt.”  
(Dworkin, 1988, p. 124)

Because feminism and radical feminism are denigrated in the dominant culture, we need to define these terms clearly. At Victoria University of Wellington, one of the courses I teach is “Accounting, Organizations and Society” (ACCY 314); a course that makes use of the critical and interdisciplinary accounting literature to explore and examine the nature of accounting as a socio-political practice. One of the topics we cover is “Accounting and Gender.” As a way of getting into this topic, I often ask students to brainstorm and discuss their own perceptions and understandings of what feminism means and who feminists are and what their values are with respect to the relations between men and women. Whenever I’ve done that, what has always been striking is that, for most students, although the values they articulate are essentially or basically very close to what I would consider feminist principles, there is always (aside from the few regular exceptions) a very strong hesitancy on their part to call themselves feminist. And the reason for that is that they often associate feminism with terms such as “angry women,” “bra-burners,” “man-haters” and “femi-nazis.”<sup>15</sup> These associations are not arbitrary and they do not come out of nowhere. They are misleading tropes widely circulated within popular discourse which are promoted by the anti-feminist “backlash” that emerged from malestream culture as it sought to rollback feminist gains (Faludi, 1992). These perceptions have nothing to do with feminism – or at least feminism as I understand it.

As a wider political project, a collective social movement and emancipatory political practice, I understand feminism to be “a movement to end sexist oppression” (hooks, 1984, p. 18). It isn’t “anti-men”; it isn’t a “women’s lib” movement that argues “that all men are the enemies of all women” (hooks, 1984, p. 34). It represents the struggle to realize everybody’s emancipatory interest in abolishing sexism and all other forms of inequality that are based on the “dominator model” of human relations. It is the struggle to replace these oppressive hierarchical relationships with social relations, forms of social being, which are based instead on equality and love (hooks, 2000). Feminism, in this sense, is universal; as bell hooks puts it, it is “for everybody” (hooks, 2000). As a form of social critique, I understand “feminism” to be an analysis of the ways in which women are oppressed as a class in this society – the ways in which men hold more power, and how those differences in power systematically disadvantage women in the public and private sphere (Jensen, 2007, p. 29). As a form of social critique, I understand “radical feminism” to be the analysis of the ways that in this patriarchal system in which we live, one of the key sites of this oppression – and a key method of domination – is sexuality (Jensen, 2007, p. 29).

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<sup>15</sup> It was the conservative right-wing radio-host Rush Limbaugh who popularized the term “femi-nazi” (Jensen, 2007).

The emancipatory nature of feminism is in part a consequence of the depth and profundity of its radical critique. Its radical critique of male supremacy doesn't just challenge particular patriarchal institutions; it also identifies in the patriarchal family (with the man on top and the woman and children under him, figuratively and often literally) the model of all other forms of oppression. It extends its critique of male supremacy's sexual oppression of women to all other forms of oppression because the "dominator model" of human relations is the same model that structures all other forms of oppression (hooks, 2000a, b). Its critique extends from sexual inequality to race-based and class-based inequality (Leidholdt and Raymond, 1990; Dworkin, 1997; hooks, 1997, 2000a, b). Because of this, radical feminism doesn't just call on the abolition of male-supremacy and sexism; it challenges *all forms* of human interaction based on relations of domination and subordination, all forms of oppression, and it calls on their replacement by forms of sociality that are based on the values of self-determination, equality, mutuality, integrity, compassion, and love (Jeffreys, 2004; hooks, 2000). One of the things that make radical feminism so provocative is that it calls into question an area of human existence that is so often left unproblematized and naturalized: the realm of sexuality. Radical feminism is so challenging to our patriarchal culture because it identifies the form of sexuality on which it is based – heterosexism – as one that is based on relations of domination and subordination, where power is eroticized and domination is 'sexy' (Jeffreys, 2004). And it is profound because it offers an alternative vision in which it is instead equality itself that is eroticized (Jeffreys, 2004).

As a form of critique, radical feminism isn't just a way of critiquing men's domination of women. It is also a way of developing a broader approach to understanding systems of power and oppression (Jensen, 2007, p. 30). It isn't the only way into a broader critique of the many types of oppression, but it is an important way. Alongside Marxism, it was one of the ways I came to practising radical critique and to developing a radical political worldview. One of the things that radical feminism taught me was that each system of power is unique in its own way, and they need to be understood and studied as such, but they also interact and intersect with each other in mutually reinforcing ways, and thus also need to be studied as such. Bell hooks' work in identifying and critiquing how various systems of power intersect with each other to provide the background context for people – women and men – from different social locations is exemplary in this regard (see, for example, hooks, 1984, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2005).<sup>16</sup> It also taught me that they have certain features in common. The identification of these features can form the basis for critical social analysis and for beginning the process of learning how to think critically and to develop a consciousness that is both critical and revolutionary in aim, intent, and praxis (Freire, 1972). Radical feminism can help us to understand and critically analyze is the

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<sup>16</sup> Radical feminism is often portrayed as reductionistic – as focussing only on issues of gender or reducing different forms of oppression to the politics of sexuality – often by liberal feminists and other people who typically adopt liberal/conservative but this is a caricature of this tradition. It is broad and profound. As the work of thinkers such as Andrea Dworkin, bell hooks and Robert Jensen amply demonstrates, radical feminism is an approach to social critique that is attentive to different forms of power and how they intersect, interact, and feed off each other. Robert Jensen, for instance, has used feminism to produce powerful critiques of not only gender but also of racial and economic justice (Jensen, 2005), the imperialist wars that flow out of this injustice (Jensen, 2009) and the ecological crisis (Jensen, 2009; see also hooks, 1995, 2000). One of the most striking features of bell hooks' writing is its constant attentiveness to intersectionality: the ways in which various forms of oppression interweave to make up the background context of people's social locations (see, for example, hooks, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1995, 2000).

various other elements of oppressive social systems,<sup>17</sup> and how they work together to constitute and reproduce the wider whole. Andrea Dworkin offers a framework for thinking about the different elements of subordination on which all oppressive social systems are based. She identifies four elements: objectification, hierarchy, submission and violence (Dworkin, 1988). In brief, these elements can be understood in this way (adapted by Jensen, 2007, p. 53):

Objectification: when “a human being, through social means, is made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold.”

Hierarchy: a question of power, with “a group on top (men) and a group on the bottom (women).”

Submission: when acts of obedience and compliance become necessary for survival, members of oppressed groups learn to anticipate the orders and desires of those who have power over them, and their compliance is then used by the dominant group to justify its dominance.

Violence: when it becomes “systematic, endemic enough to be unremarkable and normative, usually taken as an implicit right of the one committing the violence.”

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<sup>17</sup> The notion of “oppression” has been much abused. These days it is common for even some men to say that they are oppressed as men. A statement from the Men’s Movement in Britain expresses this sentiment, this idea that it’s now a case of reverse oppression where it is men who are the oppressed, marginalized and disadvantaged group: “We regard the assertion that women are disadvantaged as the Big Lie of our time. And feminism is based on the Big Lie. There can be no greater folly or degeneracy than to provide further support, via Ministers for Women, etc, to the most privileged group in our society – women – while denying the disadvantaged, suppressed and persecuted group – men – any representation at all. Feminism is about women getting something for nothing. The question of whether “feminism has gone too far” is perhaps less important than “why feminism was established at all”. This view arises from certain socio-historical conditions: it comes from a neo-liberal era that has seen the undermining of traditional male roles (as bread-winner, as powerful, as independent) through the economic re-structuring of global capitalism as capitalist interests have broken unions, privatized state assets, stripped social safety nets, and opened up market forces into previously non-commodified areas of life in an attempt to re-gain class power and to stimulate stagnating rates of growth and revitalize sluggish rates of capital accumulation (Harvey, 2005). In this situation, economically disempowered males needed a scapegoat so they turned their attention on successful middle-class and working women as the reason for their economic disempowerment. The fact that feminism itself attacked traditional male roles provided such males a reason to direct their anger and frustration not at capitalism but at women (see Faludi, 2011). We’re seeing the same thing now post-GFC with attacks on immigrants in many European countries by right-wing groups. Rather than locating the cause of unemployment in capitalism’s own internal contradictions, these groups are using immigrant workers as scapegoats. The same logic was used by the Nazis to demonize Jews, attributing to them the reason for Germany’s economic woes, and this same logic is being used by fascist and right-wing groups worldwide. Relativising “oppression” in this way guts this important critical-theoretical term of its radical content because it applies the term indiscriminately to both people from dominant and subordinate groups. Used uncritically in this way, oppression can apply to people from both dominant and subordinate groups. Fortunately, feminists offer a corrective. The feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye defines oppression as “a system of interrelated barriers and forces which reduce, immobilize and mould people who belong to a certain group, and effect their subordination to another group (individually to individuals of the other group, and as a group, to that group)” (Frye, 1983, p. 33). Oppression then isn’t about any one experience of an individual but a pattern of experiences that affect people because of their identity as part of a group. Some men may feel powerless, but this isn’t because we are oppressed *as men*; instead, it may be because of other systems of oppression. If we’re working-class, we may be economically disempowered because of class, because of the class relations of capitalist political-economy; if we’re black may be disempowered because of racism, because we’re part of a subordinate racial group; but *as men*, we’re not oppressed: we’re not oppressed as we’re the dominant sex class under male-supremacy.

This last aspect of oppressive social systems – the violence – points to the fact that oppressed people aren't just subordinated through a mutual process whereby they internalize and accept their own subordination or even through threats of force. Instead, their subordination is enacted and enforced through the terroristic practice of actual, systematic, ubiquitous, socially sanctioned violence – untold violence, but socially sanctioned violence all the same. As Andrea Dworkin explains (Dworkin, 1988, p. 198), “Oppressed people are not subjugated or controlled by dim warnings or vague threats of harm. Their chains are not made of shadows. Oppressed people are *terrorized* – by raw violence, real violence, unspeakable and pervasive violence. Their bodies are assaulted and despoiled, according to the will of the oppressor.” This violence is one of the most direct means of enacting and enforcing the subordination of the oppressed.

This violence is also always accompanied by cultural assault (Dworkin, 1988, p. 199). That is, because oppressive social systems are based on practices and values that are sharply at odds with most people's stated philosophical and theological systems – ethical, moral and spiritual codes that are rooted in notions of justice, equality, and the inherent dignity of all people – it needs to somehow justify and rationalize the domination and degradation that makes up its inner core. In other words, one of the important truths that radical feminism teaches is the extent of lying – ideological production, in more sanitized intellectual language – that has to go on, that oppressors have to promote, in any oppressive social system. Dworkin puts it like this (Dworkin, 1988, p. 198):

“The oppressor, the one who perpetrates the wrongs for his own pleasure and profit, is the master inventor of justification. He is the magician who, out of thin air, fabricates wondrous, imposing, seemingly irrefutable intellectual reasons which explain why one group must be degraded at the hands of another. He is the conjuror who takes the smoking ash of real death and turns it into stories, poems, pictures, which celebrate degradation as life's central truth. He is the illusionist who paints mutilated bodies in chains on the interior canvas of the imagination so that, asleep or awake, we can only hallucinate indignity and outrage. He is the manipulator of psychological reality, the framer of law, the engineer of social necessity, the architect of perception and being.”

An oppressive social system has to manufacture rationalizations for its hierarchy and inequality. And it has to produce ideological explanations that justify degradation. It has to create propaganda disguised as principle or knowledge (Dworkin, 1988, p. 199). As Dworkin explains (*ibid.*):

“The purity of the “Aryan” or Caucasian race is a favourite principle. Genetic inferiority is a favourite field of knowledge. Libraries are full of erudite texts that prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Jews, the Irish, Mexicans, blacks, homosexuals, women are slime. These eloquent and resourceful proofs are classified as psychology, theology, economics, philosophy, history, sociology, the so-called science of biology. Sometimes, often, they are made into stories or poems and called art. Degradation is dignified as biological, economic, or historical necessity; or, as the logical consequence of the repulsive traits or inherent limitations of the ones degraded. Out on the streets, the propaganda

takes on a more vulgar form. Signs read “Whites Only” or “Jews and Dogs Not Allowed.” Hisses of kike, nigger, queer, and pussy fill the air. In this propaganda, the victim is marked. In this propaganda, the victim is targeted. This propaganda is the globe that covers the fist in any reign of terror. The propaganda does not only sanction violence against the designated group; it incites it. This propaganda does not only threaten assault; it promises it.”

One of the fundamental strategies all oppressive systems have in common, then, is deploying stories – ideologies – that naturalize and normalize the oppressive hierarchies on which they are based, but that also, as propaganda, demonize subordinate groups and incite the very violence against them that is normalized and consistent with cultural norms. One of the things radical feminism therefore helps us to explain is how oppressive social systems ideologically legitimate themselves. It helps us understand, in other words, the situation we have in our societies where most people’s stated philosophical and theological systems are rooted in concepts of equality, justice and the inherent dignity of all people yet we allow violence, exploitation, abuse and oppression to flourish. As Robert Jensen helpfully summarises, this complex process tends to work like this (Jensen, 2007, p. 30):

- The systems in which we live are hierarchical.
- Hierarchical systems and structures tend to deliver to people in the dominant class certain privileges, pleasures and material benefits.
- People are typically resistant to give up such privileges, pleasures and benefits.
- But those benefits clearly come at the expense of those in the subordinated classes.
- Given the widespread acceptance of basic notions of equality and human rights, the existence of hierarchy has to be justified in some way, aside from crass self-interest.
- One of the most persuasive arguments for systems of domination and subordination is that they are “natural.”

In other words, oppressive systems have to work hard to make it appear as if the hierarchy they are founded is natural and therefore unchangeable and legitimate. This holds whether we talk about white supremacist culture, capitalist political economy, or male supremacy. If white people are naturally smarter than black people, then white supremacy is inevitable and justifiable; if rich people are naturally smarter and harder working than poor people, then class relations and class exploitation is natural and justifiable; and if men are naturally stronger and smarter than women, then patriarchy is natural and justifiable. These understandings can be used to help us see through not only male dominance, but all systems of illegitimate authority (Jensen, 2007, p. 31).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Jensen suggests – and I agree – that if we can move into a space in which we’re true to our stated ideals we would reject these systems as anti-human. And he concludes (ibid.): “All these systems cause suffering beyond the telling. All of them must be resisted. The connections between them must be understood.” Feminism, in this sense, enables us to engage in the emancipatory practice of radical critique whereby we can come to grasp the fundamental practices through which the subordination of oppressed peoples are enacted and enforced, how our own self-understandings of self and society might have been formed in this process, and the role that we ourselves might be playing in this process. This critical knowledge is crucial for formulating strategies of resistance and change.

Every form of oppression (male supremacy, white supremacy, capitalism, anthropocentrism) is structured by these elements of hierarchy, submission, objectification and violence (Dworkin, 1988; Jensen, 2003, 2005, 2007; Adams, 2004).<sup>19</sup> Every form of oppression requires ideological legitimation, requires propaganda, requires “cultural assault” (Dworkin, 1992). And in terms of their concrete manifestation, they interact with each other (hooks, 1995, 2000), and are historically specific to the social conditions of their time (Sayer, 1987; Wood, 1995). This analytical framework can thus be the basis for a critical theory that, by conceptualizing phenomena dialectically in their interconnections (Ollman, 1976, 2001) and in their historical specificities (Sayer, 1987; Wood, 1995; Jeffreys, 2009), can be used to critically analyze any oppressive social system. This includes the system of male supremacy today and role that pornography, prostitution and the sexual-exploitation industry more widely fits into it.

## THE RADICAL FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF PORNOGRAPHY, PROSTITUTION AND PATRIARCHY

“We live in a system of power that is male-supremacist. This means that society is organized on the assumption that men are superior to women and that women are inferior to men.”  
(Dworkin, 1988)

“Sex class is so deep it is invisible”  
(Shulamith Firestone)

In order to understand the political nature of pornography and prostitution, in order to understand their social functioning, we need to know something of the society of which they are parts; we need to pay attention to the nature of the wider social system that these institutions are embedded within, are interacting with, and help to reproduce. The starting-point of radical feminist critique is that society is male-supremacist.<sup>20</sup> Male supremacy means that society is organized on the assumption that men are superior to women and women are inferior to men (Dworkin, 1988, p. 226). To say that society is male-supremacist is to say certain things about the society in which we live. To say that society is “male supremacist” is strong language. It recalls the language of the radical black civil rights movement that fought against the slave-based and apartheid-based system of “white supremacy.” This is deliberate and intentional because radical feminism maintains that there are parallels between the two. To say that society is male-supremacist is to say that society is based on a form of *social domination*: the social domination of one sex class by another; the social domination of women by men. It is to say that society is based on male

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<sup>19</sup> Moreover, because these systems interact with each other (hooks, 1995, 2000), and contain historically specific features (Marx, 1867; Sayer, 1987; Wood, 1995), their interconnections need to be studied along with their historical specificities (see, for example, Dworkin, 1997; Jeffreys, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> In order to grasp the social functioning of pornography, prostitution and the wider sexual-exploitation industry, particularly in terms of the *sexual politics* that it instantiates, it is necessary to grasp the socio-political structure of the wider culture or society that they are embedded within and that they have a role in reproducing. For radical feminists, this means, amongst other things, recognizing that we live within a male-supremacist society. The claim that we live within a male-supremacist society is the starting-point of radical feminist critique. From there, pornography and prostitution can be seen as cultural institutions which enact, enforce and legitimate male dominance; the dominance of men over women, the subordination of women under men.

dominance and female subordination. Social subordination, as Andrea Dworkin points out, has four main parts: hierarchy, objectification, submission, and violence (Dworkin, 1988). To say that society is male supremacist is, then, also to say, amongst other things, that it is based on a *hierarchy* with men on top and women on the bottom; it is to say that it is based on the *objectification* of women whereby they are “through social means...made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold”; it is to say that, as a result of subordination and a situation in which “acts of obedience and compliance become necessary for survival,” members of oppressed groups [in this case, women] learn to anticipate the orders and desires of those who have the power over them [men] and their compliance is then used by the dominant group to justify its dominance; and it is to say that, under male-supremacy, as a result of subordination – of the preconditions of hierarchy, objectification, and submission being in place – women are subjected to a pervasive violence by men that is “systematic” yet “endemic enough to be unremarkable and normative” and “an implicit right of the one committing the violence [i.e. of men]” (Dworkin, 1988, p. 267). In other words, to say that society is male-supremacist is to say that it is an unequal society that is based on a certain form of *oppression: on the oppression of women by men*; on women as the oppressed sex class, on men as the oppressor sex class. To say that society is male supremacist is therefore to say, more forcefully, that society is based on the *colonization, subjugation and even enslavement of women – the colonization, subjugation and enslavement of women by men* (Dworkin, 1988; Frye, 1983).

This isn't a very popular view, to say the least. It doesn't align with the liberal idea, formally recognized in capitalist liberal democracies, that everyone all individuals are free and equal under law. It doesn't align with the idea, central to many theological traditions that all people are equal under God. And it doesn't appear to align with many people's everyday and lived experiences: How can women be oppressed or subordinate when some of the strongest people we know are women? Or when you yourself are independent, confident, and strong? How can men be oppressive when many of the men we know appear to be decent, caring and compassionate people who love the women in their lives? Or when you yourself consider yourself to be a man who is “one of the good guys” – decent, caring, and kind? How can society be male-supremacist – that is based on the colonization, enslavement and subjugation of women – when there doesn't appear to be any slavery around? When we live in a capitalist liberal democracy that is premised on the “freedom” and “equality” of all human beings and that safeguards the rights of “free” and “equal” individuals? Within the frames of such understandings, the claim that society is male-supremacist has a certain dissonance. This dissonance is exacerbated by the “commonsense” view today, widely circulated in mainstream media and popular culture, that as a result of feminist struggles and achievements, feminism is now redundant as gender equality is now a fact of life (Banyard, 2010).<sup>21</sup> This is “post-feminism” discourse; a discourse that claims that we now live in a post-feminist

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<sup>21</sup> The Nobel Prize Winner Doris Lessing, author of the *Golden Notebook* – considered by many to be a key feminist novel – suggests that there is now “an unconscious bias in our society: girls are wonderful; boys are terrible” and she says that she has “nothing in common with feminists” (cited in Banyard, 2010, p. 1). Conservative Party Leader and now Prime Minister of England David Cameron was asked in public whether he was a feminist and he replied “Er, I don't really know what it means anymore” and then saying, “But I suspect probably not” (ibid.). And there is even a widely touted view that feminism hasn't just been successful, that it has actually gone too far by making women so dominant that it is now men who are disadvantaged and even oppressed.

age (Faludi, 1992; Modleski, 1991). This is the age of the Spice Girls' "Girl Power" and Beyonce's "Independent Woman," the age when women "kick ass" and look sexy too (think: *Charlie's Angels*, the *Kill Bill* series). Everywhere you look in popular culture, there appears to be a raft of imagery portraying women as empowered, strong, intelligent and independent – and sexy. This post-feminist discourse is persuasive especially in light of all the changes for the better that feminist struggles have managed to achieve. At the global level, these changes include: more women are now working; more girls are now being educated; women are now living longer; women are now having fewer children; there are now more women in politics; there is now a raft of legislation, from international to local, that recognizes and protects women's rights; there are now more liberal marriage laws in some countries, and in the North the average age of marriage is going up; lesbian women in some countries now have more rights in some countries than they did before; and female genital cutting has been outlawed in 6 African countries (van der Gaag, 2004, p. 11). With this as background, and within such mental-frames, male supremacy seems too extreme a label, too exaggerated a name, too "out there" a claim, to be an accurate description of the societies that we live within.

I don't think it is though. Just because something *appears* to not be there, doesn't mean it's not. We need to keep in mind that when we take something so for granted it can actually become hard to perceive, invisible, as natural a backdrop as the air we breathe. It is possible that oppression can be so pervasive, so ubiquitous, systematic, and taken-for-granted that it actually becomes invisible, hard to perceive, the natural backdrop of our everyday lives. We need to remind ourselves, to continue this line of thinking, that although slavery is now an almost universally reviled institution, back in the 1820s United States when slavery was institutionalized and widely accepted by so many people, it was actually really hard to see it as oppressive, much less to imagine its abolition (Barry, 1995, p. 316). The same could be said for male supremacy's gender oppression. Although it exists, it is so taken-for-granted, so naturalized and bought into – by both women and men – that it often doesn't *appear* to be there. The problem with all these "commonsense" (Gramsci, 1971; Neu et al, 2001) understandings of society is that they overlook important aspects of social life that point to presence of male supremacy – they overlook evidence that points ongoing realities of gender hierarchy, objectification, submission and violence that underpins and characterises the subordination of women by men. And these are exactly the realities that radical feminist understandings help to bring out. Evidence for gender hierarchy is everywhere if you care to look, if you were to truly "notice" as Robin Morgan might put it (Morgan, 1989, p. 52). For instance: female babies have higher rates of child mortality and have a higher risk of infanticide and neglect and in many countries there is a "son preference" (van der Gaag, 2004). An estimated 38% of all pregnancies are unintended, and there are around 25 to 30 million legal abortions in the world each year, and another 20 million unsafe, illegal ones, with 40,000 women dying from the complications that follow. Women and girls are more likely to die than men and boys in low- and middle-income countries, with there being 3.9 million "missing" women and girls each year under the age of 60. At least 40% of those are never born, one-sixth die in infancy and a third in their reproductive years (World Bank, 2010). There is a common perception now that girls are outperforming boys, and that schools are now disadvantaging boys. This is misleading because, for one thing, the class gap is much wider than the gender gap: middle-class boys outperform working-class girls (Banyard, 2010). For another thing, when girls now go to school, they encounter an education system where sexual harassment by boys and

teachers is rife (which society tends to turn a blind eye from), where they learn stereotyped behaviours, where they will be discouraged from maths and science, and where they will be steered away from physical education (Banyard, 2010). And when they enter the workforce and political life, they will encounter gender pay gaps and political exclusion. In the UK, women are paid 22.6% less per hour than men (Banyard, 2010). In New Zealand, women are paid 14.18% less than men, the highest the gender pay gap has been in 10 years (New Zealand Herald, 12 November, 2012). Salaried women workers earn only 62 cents for every \$1 that men earn in Germany, 64 cents in India, and about 80 cents in Mexico and Egypt (World Bank, 2010). Of the world's members of parliament, only 18.3% are women (International Parliamentary Union press release, 5 March, 2009). In the UK, that figure is under 20% (Banyard, 2010); in the US, in 2010, women held only 17% of the seats in Congress (Centre for American Women and Politics Fact Sheet, 2013); in New Zealand, the figure is one-third (New Zealand Parliament, 2011); in Vanuatu, after the 2012 General Election, no women were elected to office (Daily Post, March 15, 2013). In all societies, and taken globally as a whole, women are under-represented at all levels of government; they are marginalized and excluded from the public sphere. This is a world where women make up 50% of the world's population, are 40% of the world's global paid labour force, do two-thirds of the world's work, but hold just 1% of the world's wealth (World Bank, 2010; Banyard, 2010). Mass poverty might be a global problem but it is also highly gendered: of the 1.5 billion people in the world living on less than \$1 a day, 70% of them are women; of the 780 million illiterate people in the world, two-thirds of them are women (Banyard, 2010). Statistics aren't adequate to explaining a complex social reality, but what they do point to are social patterns or trends. And social patterns are indicators of social structure (Weber, 1964; Bourdieu, 1979). If these statistics don't point to gender hierarchy I don't know what does. In order to "notice" the other aspects of oppression, it's helpful to keep in mind one of radical feminism's most important arguments. According to radical feminism's analysis of the patriarchal system that we live within, one of the key sites of men's subordination of women – a key method of domination and control (oppression) – is sexuality.<sup>22</sup> As the feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye puts it (quoted in Jensen, 2007, p. 48):

For females to be subordinated and subjugated to males on a global scale...billions of female individuals, virtually all who see life on this planet, must be reduced to more-or-less willing toleration of subordination and

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<sup>22</sup> This radical feminist critique is deep because it rejects the tendency in most right-wing and even left-wing thought of treating sexuality as purely a "personal" or "private" issue that is divorced from wider politics, and it is challenging because it problematizes one of the most intimate areas of our lives. While sexuality is hardly ever problematized because of the way it is typically seen as personal or private matter that doesn't have any political implications, radical feminists argue that the "private/public" distinction has been one of the bulwarks of male supremacy that has to be deconstructed and refused so that the practices such as those of sexuality that have traditionally been treated as personal or private can actually be critically interrogated in terms of their political relations and effects and subjected to radical critique (MacKinnon, 1997; Dworkin, 1988; Jeffreys, 2003, 2005). As Sheila Jeffreys explains (Jeffreys, 2005, p. 10): "This [public/private] distinction provides men with a private world of male dominance in which they can garner women's emotional, housework, sexual and reproductive energies while hiding the feudal power relations of this realm behind the shield of the protection of "privacy"." Private subordination ensures the continuity of public subordination. It is this male dominance in the private sphere that is a key means of ensuring women's lower status, marginalization and exclusion from the institutions of the public sphere (van der Gaag, 2004; Banyard, 2010).

servitude to men. The primary sites of this reduction are the sites of heterosexual relation and encounter – courtship and marriage-arrangement, romance, sexual liaisons, fucking, marriage, prostitution, the normative family, incest and child sexual assault. It is on this terrain of heterosexual connection that girls and women are habituated to abuse, insult, degradation, that girls are reduced to women – to wives, to whores, to mistresses, to sex slaves, to clerical workers and textile workers, to the mothers of men’s children.<sup>23</sup>

Sex isn’t normally problematized in this way because it is usually seen as a ‘personal’ or ‘private’ matter separate from the sphere of wider politics, and also because it is treated as a completely ‘natural’ distinction. Men are clearly different to women, women are clearly different to men. There is no hierarchy, there’s just a difference – a sexual difference. This ideology of “sexual difference,” however, is what masks male supremacy’s gender inequality and it is what our own Western society is founded on. It’s only because it’s so ubiquitous and pervasive, so accepted by so many women and men, that it appears to be “natural.” “Sex,” in this light, isn’t a natural construct; instead, it’s a social category into which humans are placed and it functions to make heterosexuality as a political form of social organization compulsory, to justify compulsory heterosexuality as legitimate, and to found society itself as heterosexual (Wittig, 1996, p. 27):

The category of sex is the one that rules as “natural” the relation that is at the base of (heterosexual) society and through which half of the population, women, are “heterosexualised” (the making of women is like the making of eunuchs, the breeding of slaves, of animals) and submitted to a heterosexual economy.

The political function of the “category of sex” is to enable people to distinguish between those who are in the dominant sex class under male supremacy and those who are subordinate. It does this by treating half the population – the dominant sex class, men – as human beings, and reducing the rest to sexualized beings. As Monique Wittig explains (Wittig, 1996, p. 28):

The category of sex is the product of heterosexual society that turns half of the population into sexual beings. Wherever they are, whatever they do (including working in the public sector), they are seen (and made) sexually available to men, and they, breasts, buttocks, costume, must be visible. They must wear their yellow star, their constant smile, day and night.

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<sup>23</sup> To say that “[i]t is on this terrain of heterosexual connection that girls and women are habituated to abuse, insult, degradation, that girls are reduced to women – to wives, to whores, to mistresses, to sex slaves, to clerical workers and textile workers, to the mothers of men’s children” does not mean that every man treats every woman as a sex slave. But it does mean, however, is that under the patriarchal system in which we live, men “are generally trained through a variety of cultural institutions to view sex as the acquisition of pleasure by the taking of women” (Jensen, 2007, p. 48). Men are socialized into seeing sex as the acquisition of pleasure by taking women and we (men) are trained to see sex as the sphere in which we’re naturally dominant and women are naturally passive or submissive. Under male supremacy, this dominance and submission is thus sexualized; sex is “sexy” when men are dominant and women are submissive. This is the eroticization of power. The predictable result of this state of affairs is a world in which violence, sexualized violence, sexual violence, and violence-by-sex is so common that it must be considered normal – that is, an expression of the sexual norms of the culture, rather than violations of the norms (Jensen, 2007, p. 48).

This focus on sexuality is important because it problematizes an aspect of the human condition and social life that tends to be overlooked in both (male-dominated) right-wing and left-wing politics (Dworkin, 1992; Leidholdt and Raymond, 1990), because it refuses to treat sexuality as a purely “personal” or “private” matter free of the taint of wider systems of political domination (MacKinnon, 1987; Jeffreys, 2003, 2005), and because it helps to bring out the specificity of the institutionalized objectification and organized violence that women, as the subordinate sex class under male supremacy, are systematically subjected to.

Under male supremacy, the particular type of objectification that women are systematically subjected to is sexual objectification. They are reduced to sexual objects. They are reduced to “sex.”<sup>24</sup> As Catherine MacKinnon once put it (MacKinnon, 1990, in Leidholdt and Raymond, 1990, p. 10): “...in a society of sex inequality...sex is what women have to sell, sex is what we are, sex is what we are valued for, we are born sex, we die sex.” There are many ways in which this sexual objectification of women takes place. They range from informal everyday practices like wolf-whistling that men use on women to more institutionalized means such as the “beauty” practices of male supremacy that have the function of turning women into sexual objects, and making women’s bodies sexually accessible to the male gaze (Dworkin, 1974; Jeffreys, 2003). This sexual objectification serves a very important function: it helps to guarantee male sexual access to women’s bodies (Pateman, 1988). In this sense, male supremacy is founded on the male sex right: the right of men to have sexual access to women’s bodies (Pateman, 1988). Historically, this right has been most commonly exercised through marriage, as is evidenced by the difficulties feminists have encountered when struggling to get rape in marriage recognized as a crime rather than the legitimate exercise of a man’s ‘conjugal rights’ (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 41; Pateman, 1988). Historically, marriage was a key means of guaranteeing the male sex right by reducing them to sexual and reproductive chattel that could be traded and exchanged between men. When I say “historically,” I don’t mean to give the false impression that this trade and exchange and commodification/objectification of women is past history, something to do with the ancient past, and something we’ve gotten over. This objectification and trade and exchange of women between men isn’t peripheral to patriarchy; it goes to the heart of its social and historical origins, and it is central to the capitalist patriarchal project today. Gerder Lerner, in the *Creation of Patriarchy*, which looks at how patriarchy originated in the ancient Middle East, identifies the development of the exchange of women for profit as the lynchpin of the developing system of patriarchy (Lerner, 1987). In most parts of the world, women are still treated as male property – as sexual and reproductive chattel (Jeffreys, 2009). And even in many western countries, where today, as a result of feminist struggles and gains, women are now no longer treated as sexual chattel under marriage laws, the right of men to women’s bodies for sexual use hasn’t gone but remains as an assumption at the basis of heterosexual relationships in general as a substantial body of feminist research reveals (Phillips, 2000). 1 in 7 women who have ever been married have experienced rape with the threat or use of force by husbands (Russell, 1990; Finkelhor and Yllo, 1985); there is the wider of problem of women in relationships with men enduring a great deal of unwanted sex which, while not easily

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<sup>24</sup> Bartky (1990) defines the practice of sexual objectification as this: “a person is sexually objectified when her sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from the rest of her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (p. 26, cited in Jeffreys, 2005, p. 8).

classifiable as ‘rape’ since the women do not say no, is often fiercely resented and experienced as profoundly subordinating and abusive (Gavey, 1992; Jeffreys, 1993, 2009). Marriage is still a sphere of profound gender inequality, male dominance and female subordination. It is one – and only one – of the many means through which the sexual objectification and subordination of women by men is carried out. This sexual objectification, this reduction to “sex,” is what women, as members of the same subordinate sex class, experience as a common condition. As Dworkin outlines, they are (Dworkin, 1983, p. 221): “Subordinate to men, sexually colonised in a sexual system of dominance and submission, denied rights on the basis of sex, historically chattel, generally considered biologically inferior, confined to sex and reproduction...” The result of this sex class categorization and social structuring is that “Women are defined, valued, judged, in one way only: as women – that is, with sex organs that must be used... Women are born into the labour pool specific to women: the labour is sex” (ibid., p. 64).

To say, as Marilyn Frye does in the quote above, that “[i]t is on this terrain of heterosexual connection that girls and women are habituated to abuse, insult, degradation, that girls are reduced to women – to wives, to whores, to mistresses, to sex slaves, to clerical workers and textile workers, to the mothers of men’s children” does not mean that every man treats every woman as a sex slave. But it does mean, however, is that under the patriarchal system in which we live, men “are generally trained through a variety of cultural institutions to view sex as the acquisition of pleasure by the taking of women” (Jensen, 2007, p. 48). Men are socialized into seeing sex as the acquisition of pleasure by taking women and we (men) are trained to see sex as the sphere in which we’re naturally dominant and women are naturally passive or submissive. Under male supremacy, this dominance and submission is thus sexualized; sex is “sexy” when men are dominant and women are submissive (Jensen, 2007, p. 48). This is the eroticization of power (ibid.). The predictable result of this state of affairs is a world in which violence, sexualized violence, sexual violence, and violence-by-sex is so common that it must be considered normal – that is, an expression of the sexual norms of the culture, rather than violations of the norms (Jensen, 2007, p. 48). Global estimates say that 1 in every 3 women will be battered, sexually abused, attempted to be raped, or raped in their lifetimes.<sup>25</sup> In the UK, 1 in 4 women will experience at the hands of a current or former partner (Banyard, 2010, p. 105). This is Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) – which is often referred to as ‘domestic violence.’ In the UK, 1 in 4 women will experience IPV at some point in her life, with 2 women being murdered each week because of it (Banyard, 2010, p. 108). This is a gendered phenomenon with women constituting 85% of the victims of IPV, and women who become violent and kill their partner are significantly more likely to be responding to violence perpetrated against them, rather than instigating it (ibid.). In the US, 1 in 3 girls are sexually abused before they are 18 (Russell, 1984; Jensen, 2007), and 1 out of 2 married women has been or is being beaten (Gibbs, 1993), and FBI statistics reveal that every 9 seconds a woman is being beaten (AMA, 1998).<sup>26 27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> In total, globally speaking, 1 in 3 women throughout the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused at some point in her life (Banyard, 2010, p. 106).

<sup>26</sup> In the US, every nine seconds a woman is battered, resulting in 3-4 million women being battered each year (AMA, 1998); conservatively, each year 1 million women suffer nonfatal violence by an intimate (Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, 1995); 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence in their lifetime (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006); and as many as 324,000 women each year experience intimate partner violence during their pregnancy (Gazmarairian, 2000). 90 to 95% of all domestic violence victims are women (A Report of the Violence Against Women Research Strategic Planning Workshop, 1995).

In the US, 1 in 3 women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime (Banyard, 2010, p. 111). 30% of women (and up to 10% of men) have been sexually abused in childhood, and men make up approximately 95% of the perpetrators (ibid.). The much-quoted figure of 1 in 3 women being sexually abused in the US comes from an early 1980s study of 930 women in San Francisco, in which 38% of the women reported that they had been sexually abused before age 18 (Russell, 1984, pp. 285-286). Since then, there's been a follow-up study by researchers in Toronto who found that of the 420 women they interviewed, 54% had been sexually abused before age 16 (Randall and Haskell, 1995, pp. 6-31). This is rape culture. This is a culture in which, although nominally a crime, rape is so common that it's often not recognized as such by both the men who perpetrate it and the women who are raped by the men.<sup>28</sup> This systemic violence forms the background of everyday life for women under male supremacy and it is the backdrop for the gynocidal outbursts of woman-killing that have marked patriarchal history in which have been murdered and massacred in their millions (Daly, 1979; Dworkin, 1974). This systematized violence is why radical feminists call male supremacy an ongoing "war against women" (Dworkin, 1988, 1997; French, 1992), and it is why Mary Daly characterizes life for women as one of "a state of atrocity" under male supremacy (Daly, 1979). This is the violence – the systematized and often sexual and sexualized violence – that male supremacy is predicated on.<sup>29 30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Given how much pressure on women and children not to talk about sexual abuse, we are not likely to ever know exactly how much rape and child sexual assault there is in male supremacist culture. What we do know, however, is that the numbers are so high that the commonly touted idea that men put women up on a pedestal, or that women use sex to control men, has to be replaced with a painful truth: We live in a world that hates women and children (Jensen, 2007, p. 49).

<sup>28</sup> Under a rape culture, rape is normalized – the cultural norm or mode through which sexual interactions takes place) (Dworkin, 1997) – and because of this it happens against women but is often not recognized either by victims or perpetrators. This is one of the signs of rape culture: rape happens but because it is so normalized, it is not actually seen as rape – that is, as violence, as abuse, as a crime; it is seen as just "sex." A 1988 study on campus sexual assaults carried out by the Ms Magazine Project on Campus Sexual Assault, for instance, found that although more than 50% of the women interviewed in one study reported being victims of sexual aggression, only 27% of the women whose experience met the legal definition of rape labelled themselves as rape victims, and arguably most disturbing, 47% of the men who had committed rape said that they expected to engage in a similar assault in the future, and 88% of men who reported having committed an assault that met the legal definition of rape were adamant that they had not committed rape (Jensen, 2007, pp. 48-49). That is a rape culture. A rape culture is such that rape is so normalized and equated with sex that it is often seen as exactly that: just sex – and by both victims and perpetrators. Moreover, a rape culture is also one that legitimates the sexual violence that it is based on by hiding it in various other ways. One is through the general culture of silence that surrounds sexual assault and abuse. Rape, for instance, is extremely under-reported. Another is through the skewed reporting of rape that the mainstream/malestream media typically carries out which places produces the misleading impression that rape is primarily something that strangers carry out rather than women's intimate partners or former partners. And yet another is through a heavily biased legal system that favours rapists over their victims. In the UK, for instance, the conviction rate for rape is only 6.5% (Banyard, 2010). These are all signs of a rape culture.

<sup>29</sup> This violence testifies to the fact that male supremacy is based on an ongoing "war against women"; it testifies to the fact that it is an ongoing war against women (French, 1992; Dworkin, 1988, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> This doesn't mean that all men rape; it just means that rape comes out of a culture that socially sanctions rape. It wouldn't occur if it weren't socially sanctioned: the fact that it is ubiquitous and its rate so epidemic shows that it is actually consistent with dominant social norms rather than a violation of these norms (Jensen, 2007). They can only be the result of a culture whose dominant mode of sexual interaction is based on unequal relations in which male dominance and female subordination is eroticized (Dworkin, 1988; Jeffreys, 1997, 2003; Jensen, 2007). In this light, rape isn't an outlier, an accidental occurrence, because it is based on the same power relations of male dominance and female subordination that structure those sexual interactions we typically treat as simply "sex" (Dworkin, 1997; Jensen, 2007).

<sup>31</sup> This violence is so pervasive and at such epidemic levels, that we need to replace the fictions around men putting women on a pedestal with a painful truth: we live in a world that hates women and children (Jensen, 2007, p. 49; Dworkin, 1974). This is a harsh statement that many men and women would reject, but we need to be clear about what's being said here. This isn't to suggest that every man hates every woman. And it isn't to assert that all men engage in overtly misogynistic behaviour. As Robert Jensen explains (Jensen, 2007, p. 49):

When we talk about trends in society, we are trying to understand patterns, and to identify a pattern in human affairs is not to assert that every single person behaves the same way. But that individual variation does not mean we cannot identify patterns and learn from them.

Like Jensen, I learned that men hate women, and I was trained to hate women, in the locker room. This isn't just in actual gym locker rooms; it's in all-male spaces, in those places where men are alone with each other and talk with the knowledge that no women will hear them (Jensen, 2007, pp. 49-50). Jensen points out that, "Men almost never talk in public about what they say in locker rooms, and women – by definition – are not there to hear it. In those spaces, men talk about how they feel, or think they are supposed to feel, about women. It is very often a language of contempt, of frank discussion about what women are really good for" (ibid.). Most of the men reading this know what Jensen is talking about do. I do. I used to take part in those discussions. And I find it still easy to unreflectively fall into that woman-hating language. Aside from the evidence of woman-hating from these privileged all-male spaces, there's a simple observation we can make that shows how men hate women and children (Jensen, 2007, p. 50): "No society would let happen what happens to women and children in this culture if at some level it did not have contempt for them. We allow women and children to be raped at a rate that can lead to no other conclusion except that we place a lesser value on their lives."

This is male supremacy. This is the social context in which prostitution and pornography function.

With this as background, the radical feminist critique of prostitution and pornography is simple and direct: both are institutions that, like rape, like marriage, serve as domains that enforce and protect the male sex right (Pateman, 1988); both are sexual means through which male dominance and female subordination is reproduced (Dworkin, 1988, 1992, 1996, 1997);<sup>32</sup> both, like the wider rape culture that they are a part of are predicated on sexual abuse and violence (Dworkin, 1988; Jeffreys, 1997/2008); both institutions enact and are based on the sexual subordination of women; both are a means through which the hierarchical power structure of male supremacy is reproduced. Drawing connections between rape, marriage, prostitution

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<sup>31</sup> Although it is typically treated as one-off, accidental, and isolated acts perpetrated primarily by strangers, this isn't true. It's primarily carried out on women and children by men that they know – husbands, partners, lovers, brothers, and sons. And herein, lies its political significance: the violence is carried out to maintain male dominance in the private sphere – in interpersonal sexual relations, in the family, in the home. It isn't because men, being naturally aggressive, "lose control" or "go over the edge" because batterers do not "lose control" and assault anyone; they only "lose it" and assault those women they see as theirs in order to dominate and control them.

<sup>32</sup> All the elements of female subordination are present in both pornography and prostitution. Hierarchy, submission, objectification, and violence – they are all there – and in spades (Jensen, 2007; Dines, 2010; Jeffreys, 1997, 2010).

and pornography isn't hyperbole. As Andrea Dworkin explains, there are important historical and etymological connections between all four. This is how she indelibly puts it; it is a long passage but worth reproducing in full (Dworkin, 1981, "Pornography and Male Supremacy," pp. 226-231, in Dworkin, 1988):

The sexual [colonization] of women's bodies is a material reality: men control the sexual and reproductive uses of women's bodies. In this system of male power, rape is the paradigmatic sexual act. The word "rape" comes from the Latin *rapere*, which means to steal, seize, or carry away. The first dictionary definition of rape is still "the act of seizing and carrying off by force." A second meaning of rape is "the act of physically forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse." Rape is first abduction, kidnapping, the taking of a woman by force. Kidnapping, or rape, is also the first known form of marriage – called "marriage by capture" the second known form of marriage is basically prostitution: a father, rather than allow the theft of his daughter, sells her. Most social arrangements for the exchange of women operate on one ancient model or the other: stealing, which is rape, or buying and selling, which is prostitution. The relationship of prostitution to rape is simple and direct: whatever can be stolen can be sold. This means that women were both stolen and sold and in both cases were sexual commodities; and when practices were codified into laws, women were defined as sexual chattel. Women are still basically viewed as sexual chattel – socially, legally, culturally, and in practice. Rape and prostitution are central contemporary female experiences; women as a class are seen as belonging to men as a class and are systematically kept subservient to men; married women in most instances have lost sexual and reproductive control of their own bodies, which is what it means to be sexual chattel. The principle that whatever can be stolen can be sold applies not only to women as such, but also to the sexuality of women. The sexuality of women has been stolen outright, appropriated by men – conquered, possessed, taken, violated; women have been systematically and absolutely denied the right to sexual self-determination and to sexual integrity; and because the sexuality of women have been stolen, this sexuality itself, *it* – as distinguished from an individual woman as a sentient being – *it* can be sold. It can be represented pictorially and sold; the idea or suggestion of it can be sold; representations of it in words can be sold; signs and gestures that denote it can be sold. Men can take this sexuality – steal it, rape it – and men can pimp it.

We do not know when in history pornography as such first appeared. We do know that it is a product of culture, specifically male-supremacist culture, and that it comes after both rape and prostitution. Pornography can only develop in a society that is viciously male-supremacist, one in which rape and prostitution are not only well-established but systematically practiced and ideologically endorsed. Feminists are often asked whether pornography causes rape. The fact is that rape and prostitution caused pornography. Politically, culturally, socially, sexually and economically, rape and prostitution generated pornography; and pornography depends for its continued existence on the rape and prostitution of women.

The word pornography comes from the ancient Greek *pornē* and *graphos*: it means "the graphic depiction of whores." *Pornē* means "whore," specifically the lowest class of whore, which in ancient Greece was the brothel slut available to all male citizens. There were distinct classes of prostitutes in ancient Greece:

the *pornē* was the sexual cow. She was, simply and clearly and absolutely, a sexual slave. *Graphos* means “writing, etching, or drawing.”

The whores called *porneia* were captive in brothels, which were designated as such by huge phalluses painted on or constructed near the door. They were not allowed out, were never educated, were barely dressed, and in general were miserably treated; they were the sexual garbage of Greek society. Wives were kept in nearly absolute isolation, allowed the company of slaves and young children only. High-class prostitutes, a class distinct from the *porneia* and from wives both, had the only freedom of movement accorded women, and were the only educated women.

Two very significant words originated in the ancient Greece many of us revere: *democracy* and *pornography*. Democracy from its beginnings excluded all women and some men. Pornography from its beginnings justified and promoted this exclusion of all women by presenting the sexuality of all women as the sexuality of the brothel slut. The brothel slut and the sexuality of the brothel slut had been stolen and sold – raped and prostituted; and the rape and prostitution of that captive and degraded being with her captive and degraded sexuality is precisely the sexual content of pornography, the will of the chattel whore is synonymous with her function: she is purely for sex and her function is defined as her nature and her will. The isolation of wives was based on the conviction that women were so sexually voracious on male terms that wives could not be let out – or they would naturally turn whorish. The chattel whore was the natural woman, the woman without the civilizing discipline of marriage. The chattel whore, of course, as we know, was the product of the civilizing discipline of slavery, but men did not then and do not now see it that way.

Pornography expressed and illustrated this valuation of women and women’s sexuality, and that is why it was named pornography – “the graphic depiction of whores.” Depicting women as whores and the sexuality of women as sluttish is what pornography does. Its job in the politically coercive and cruel system of male supremacy is to justify and perpetuate the rape and prostitution from which it springs. This is its function, which makes it incompatible with any notion of freedom, unless one sees freedom as the right of men to rape and prostitute women. Pornography as a genre says that the stealing and buying and selling of women are not acts of force or abuse because women want to be raped and prostituted because that is the nature of women and the nature of female sexuality. Gloria Steinem has said that culture is successful politics. As a cultural phenomenon, pornography is the political triumph of rape and prostitution over all female rebellion and resistance.”<sup>33</sup>

These historical interconnections are important to keep in sight because they enable us to note how prostitution and pornography are locked into a symbiotic relationship with the other practices of male supremacy that enforce male dominance

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<sup>33</sup> Gerder Lerner’s study of the emergence of patriarchy in the ancient Middle East identifies, as the lynchpin of the system, the exchange of women by men and between men for profit (Lerner, 1987). Historically the primary means for this exchange of women has been marriage (Pateman, 1988), and it is backed up and enforced by the threat and practice of rape, the archetypical practice of male dominance in which the male sex right is asserted and women’s colonized status as sexual chattel enforced. This is why there is a strong tradition in radical feminism that draws parallels between marriage and prostitution, and also why, feminist hard-fought gains notwithstanding, marriage still contains many of the hallmarks of sexual inequality between men and women (Pateman, 1988; Jeffreys, 2009).

and enact the subordination of women. When discussing prostitution and pornography, we can't discuss them in isolation from male-supremacy's rape culture. In the woman-hating culture that we live within, prostitution is the material practice of woman hatred, pornography its ideology.

## **PROSTITUTION: THE PRACTICE OF MALE DOMINANCE**

I want to bring us back to basics. Prostitution: what is it? It is the use of a woman's body for sex by a man, he pays money, he does what he wants. The minute you move away from what it really is, you move away from prostitution into the world of ideas. You will feel better; you will have a better time; it is more fun; there is plenty to discuss, but you will be discussing ideas, not prostitution. Prostitution is not an idea. It is the mouth, the vagina, the rectum, penetrated usually by a penis, sometimes hands, sometimes objects, by one man and then another and then another and then another and then another. That's what it is. I ask you to think about your own bodies – if you can do so outside the world that the pornographers have created in your minds, the flat, dead, floating mouths and vaginas and anuses of women. I ask you to think concretely about your own bodies used that way. How sexy is it? Is it fun? The people who defend prostitution and pornography want you to feel a kinky little thrill every time you think of something being stuck in a woman. I want you to feel the delicate tissues in her body that are being misused. I want you to feel what it feels like when it happens over and over again: because that is what prostitution is.  
(Dworkin, 1993)

From the 1960s onwards, radical feminist theorists have analyzed prostitution uncompromisingly as the ultimate in the reduction of women to sexual objects that can be bought and sold. According to such radical feminist analyses, this reductionism forms the sexual slavery that lies at the roots of marriage and prostitution, and that forms the foundation of women's oppression (Millett, 1975; Barry, 1979, 1995; Dworkin, 1983; Pateman, 1988; Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2009). This isn't how prostitution is typically understood. Traditional definitions of male commentators, for instance, depict it as primarily the sexual activity of women, omitting entirely the 'johns' or perpetrators, and the system of male supremacy, entirely from the definition. This omission is standard practice in most research and analysis of prostitution up to the present day (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 4). Abraham Flexner, for instance, whose *Prostitution in Europe* (1913) is often used as a foundational text in the study of prostitution, defined prostitution as (quoted in Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 4):

characterised by three elements variously combined: barter, promiscuity, emotional indifference. Any person is a prostitute who habitually or intermittently has sexual relations more or less promiscuously for money or other mercenary considerations. [quoted in Ellis, 1946b, pp. 152-153]

Sheila Jeffreys provides a radical feminist corrective by providing a definition of prostitution that places johns or the perpetrators squarely in the picture. Prostitution can be defined, in radical feminist terms, as (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 4):

Male sexual behaviour characterised by three elements variously combined: barter, promiscuity, emotional indifference. Any man is a prostitution abuser who, for the purposes of his sexual satisfaction, habitually or intermittently reduces another human being to a sexual object by use of money or other mercenary considerations.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This definition doesn't mean women cannot be – and are – prostitutes; what it does more is highlight the fact that the majority of prostitutes are overwhelmingly male and that prostitution is a male-supremacist institutions that serves the male-supremacist interest of making the bodies of primarily women and children sexually available for use and abuse by primarily men.

These radical feminist understandings of prostitution are also not “commonsense” because the dominant representations of prostitution which mainstream/malestream media chooses to portray are those of the pro-prostitution movement that, consisting of some prostitutes’ rights movements, government policy makers, non-government organisations, human rights activists and feminist theorists, and drawing on neoliberal and liberal feminist arguments, have constructed a discourse that portrays prostitution as just “sex work,” a job like any other, that women have freely “chosen,” and that can even be seen as “empowering” and “sexually liberating” (for a powerful critique of these pro-prostitution arguments, their social origins, and of prostitution itself, see Jeffreys, 1997/2008). The problem with these pro-prostitution positions is their neglect of the role that power, and more specifically, male supremacy, plays in the reproduction of prostitution, their effacement of the violence that it is based on, and their masking of the harms that it produces. Radical feminists, by contrast, in analyzing these overlooked dimensions, have shown how prostitution, rather than being “empowering” for women, the result of their “choice,” or “sexually liberating” for them, is instead a form of male sexual violence against women (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 6). Kate Millett’s analysis of prostitution is an incisive and powerful example of this radical feminist approach. According to Millett, prostitution was “paradigmatic, somehow the very core of the female’s condition” (Millett, 1970). It brought her “subjection right out in the open” more clearly than marriage since the latter hides the cash nexus behind a contract, and it turned a woman into a thing to be bought and sold, effecting her “reification,” dehumanizing her into a sexual thing, and reducing her to no more than “cunt” (Millett, 1970). Millett’s analysis explains that although sex takes place, what is really being bought is the degradation of the woman and the power of the man over the woman (Millett, 1975, p. 15):

It is not sex the prostitute is really made to sell; it is degradation. And the buyer, the john, is not buying sexuality, but power, power over another human being, the dizzy ambition of being a lord of another’s will for a stated period of time.”

One of the ways in which pro-prostitution organizations have tried to justify prostitution is by making use of liberalism’s language of “choice” (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2009). This began in the 1970s when certain prostitutes’ rights organizations began breaking away from earlier groups who had argued that prostitutes were oppressed by unjust laws and persecuting police forces and that prostitution arose from dire economic necessity, and begun arguing instead that it was a job like any other that women “chose,” and even that it represented sexual liberation for women and was on the cutting edge of women’s freedom instead of being in any way connected with women’s oppression (Jeffreys, 1997, p.65). This was a major contradiction in feminism because prostitutes themselves were coming forward saying that they “chose” to prostitute themselves. This language of “choice” is often used by liberal feminists and it is used by prostitutes’ rights movements and by male defenders of men’s sexual rights to make prostitution seem acceptable (Leidholdt and Raymond, 1990; Jeffreys, 1997/2008). This language of choice, however, is deeply problematic from a feminist perspective because it is the language of sexual liberalism. It draws from liberal theory 18<sup>th</sup> century male theorists first put forward to justify a bourgeois society in which men were raised above “others.” And these “others” have always included the rest of nature (animals) and human beings who weren’t men i.e. women. One of the ways in which “choice” based liberal discourse is severely

deficient is in its ability to help us make sense of consent. Feminist analysts of marital rape and sadomasochism have pointed out that consent is not a very effective way to distinguish between abusive and non-abusive sex (Russell, 1990; Hawthorne, 1991; Jeffreys, 1993). And more widely, it isn't a useful concept for establishing the presence of oppression (Barry, 1995, p. 65). Oppression cannot be effectively gauged according to the degree of "consent" since even in slavery there was some consent if consent is defined as inability to see, or feel entitled to, any alternative (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 135). What ideas of choice or consent do is transform the sex of prostitution from being a class condition of women to one of the personal choice of the individual (ibid., p. 136).

Another way in which prostitution has been justified in the pro-prostitution discourse of pro-prostitution prostitutes' rights groups, and in the policy documents and regulations of those countries where prostitution has been decriminalized and legalized, has been to portray it as just "sex work," or just "work," just a job like any other (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, pp. 161-195, 2009). Arguments of this kind have tried to depict it as a type of "service work," of selling "sexual services," as just a "job," and even as a type of "profession" (St James and Alexander, 1977; Pheterson, 1989; Perkins and Bennett, 1985; Bell, 1987b; Shrage, 1994). This discourse tries to depict prostitution as dignifying and fulfilling "work." In trying to depict this discourse as just work, it fails to problematize "work" itself and the way in which, generally speaking, "women's work," which prostitution itself has a highly gendered institution fits into, tends to attract lower status and remuneration (Waring, 1988; Dworkin, 1988; Jeffreys, 1997/2008). Arlie Hochschild, who has contributed greatly to our understanding of "women's work" has shown, in her study of flight attendants, how damaging this form of "service" work can be in its necessity to commercialize emotion (Hochschild, 1983). Drawing on Marx, whose notion of alienation captures not only the exploitative nature of capitalism's labour process but also its damaging human consequences, Hochschild shows the harm that the "active emotional labour involved in the selling" produces. The cost of carrying out this kind of "emotional labour" is that "the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self – either the body or the margins of the soul – that is used to do the work" (ibid., p. 7). The emotional labour of flight attendants resembles those engaged in by women in other traditional female jobs and Hochschild explains that women are better at engaging in these forms of labour, which include prostitution, because they have learnt the skills to behave as a subordinate in relation to men, and the skills of emotional labour are those of deference.

In such a context, the idea that the presence of a legal contract provides the basis for meaningful consent is just as problematic because this argument is also based on the premises of liberalism (Pateman, 1988). Under liberal theory, contracts are compatible with equality because they are voluntarily entered into by two free and equal parties. Marx showed early on, however, that this presumed equality doesn't hold in the context of capitalism where one class owns all the means of production and another class, separated from these means, are forced by the "dull compulsion" of the market to enter into employment contracts with the owners of these means, just in order to obtain the means of life (Marx, 1867). It doesn't hold, in other words, under hierarchical conditions of social domination. Carol Pateman, in *The Sexual Contract*, extends this idea to reject the possibility of an equal contract serving as the basis for prostitution arrangements since the context of male supremacy and capitalism – that is, the context of capitalist patriarchy – nullifies the possibility of equal contract in all forms of employment (Pateman, 1988). Pateman explains that when prostitution is

defended by contractarians, the prostitute is represented as an owner of property in her person who contracts out part of that property in the market. She is portrayed as able to “contract out use of her services without detriment to herself” and prostitution is seen as a trade that anyone could enter (Pateman, 1988, p. 191). Prostitution, however, is not “mutual, pleasurable exchange of the use of bodies, but the unilateral use of a woman’s body by a man in exchange for money” (ibid.). In this light, prostitution isn’t an “empowering” realm at all, but instead an institution that is there to remind men and women of the law of male sex-right (ibid., p. 199). Men’s demand for it is part of the contemporary expression of masculine sexuality (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 175). The prostitution contract differs from other forms of contract though in that it is with a woman. The woman often enters into the contract with another worker, not with a capitalist. The prostitution contract is with the customer, not the employer (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 175). The customer gains control of the prostitute in the same way that employers do with workers, with an important difference being that whereas employers are generally happy to replace workers with machines when they are cheaper, the customer wants the body of a real live woman (ibid.). In prostitution, it is the body of the woman that is the subject of the contract.

One of the things about prostitution that liberal theory fails to consider is the integral relationship between body and self and the damaging effects that are produced when the body is alienated from the self as it is in prostitution. Pateman, by contrast, in exploring this issue of bodily experience calls attention to the integral relationship between body and self (Pateman, 1988). As an example, she points to the way in which sexually significant body parts are often used as terms of abuse for women and men. She argues that identity is inseparable from the sexual construction of the self. This differentiates the sale of women’s bodies in prostitution from other types of sale (Pateman, 1988, p. 207):

sale of women’s bodies in the capitalist market involves sale of a self in a different manner, and in a more profound sense, than sale of the body of a male baseball player or sale of command over the use of the labour (body) of a wage slave.

This helps explain the defensive strategies used by prostituted women: they have to distance themselves what is happening to them because of the intimate connection between sexuality and the self (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 176). This distancing represents a problem for johns since the satisfaction that they gain from achieving a sense of mastery is impaired by it. Pateman concludes that “men gain public acknowledgement as women’s sexual masters – that is what is wrong with prostitution” (Pateman, 1988, pp. 207, 208).

Another barrier that stands in the way of seeing the oppressiveness of prostitution is the “commonsense” male-supremacist view that treats it as just “sex.” This is an important argument challenge because, as Sheila Jeffreys points out, the key to understanding prostitution lies in the theorising of sexuality (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 196). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, sexologists had an essentialist approach to sexuality: they saw men’s imperative sexual urges as biologically inevitable and thought women were naturally less sexual, less sexually enthusiastic (Acton, 1987a, b). Later, in the “sexual revolutions” of the 1920s and 1960s, radical sociologists questioned the whole idea that sexual practices and even the sexual experience of pleasure were based on biology, and developed social constructionist explanations of these “natural” facts. Symbolic interactionism was ruthlessly social

constructionist in just this way long before post-structuralism became fashionable in the 1970s, when Lacanians and Foucaultians came to be seen as the ultimate social constructionists (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 197). Post-Lacan and post-Foucault, it was no longer possible to talk about “sexuality”; only “sexualities.” These approaches, however, while differing greatly over the importance given to biology in explaining sexuality, share the common problem explaining sexual practice and sexual feelings with no reference to the power relationship between the sexes (Jeffreys, 1997/2008). When such theories are used, the socially constructed nature of sexuality is often asserted, without any consideration of its social origins, how it is socially constructed, who does the constructing, and whose interests does it serve (Jeffreys, 1997/2008; MacKinnon, 1989; Allen and Leonard, 1996).<sup>35</sup> Under such approaches, crucial questions about male dominance are overlooked, and violence and abuse on which prostitution is based are typically rendered invisible and washed away. The consequence of such approaches is the reification of prostitution as either ‘naturally’ unchangeable or the unchallenged and unproblematized background of social constructionist approaches.

Radical feminism, by contrast, does offer explanations of what forces are constructing sexuality and for what purposes (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 205). Stevi Jackson, for instance, in developing a social constructionist framework in a feminist direction has shown how it is the organization of male power that dictates the direction of this social learning, and that this form of male power is organized through the institution of heterosexuality itself. As Jackson explains, people learn to be sexual within “a society in which ‘real sex’ is defined as a quintessentially heterosexual act, vaginal intercourse, and in which sexual activity is thought of in terms of an active subject and passive object” (Jackson, 1996a, pp. 25, 23). Radical feminism’s theorization of sexuality is based on the recognition that “men” and “women” are political categories similar to those of class (Wittig, 1995). The category “men” is the ruling class and can only exist in relation to its subordinated opposite, “women” (Wittig, 1995, p. 137). The radical feminist legal scholar and professor Catherine MacKinnon actually defines a feminist theory of sexuality specifically as one which recognizes that sexuality is “a social construct of male power defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive of the meaning of gender” (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 128). Criticising socialist, including socialist feminist, thought for failing to have a theory that will explain the oppression of women, she suggests an alternative perspective that recognizes sexuality as the organizing principle of male supremacy. As she argues, “Sexuality is to feminism, what work is to Marxism: that which is most one’s own, yet most taken away” (ibid., p. 3). Sexuality produces gender; it creates the political categories of “women” and “men” (ibid.). In such a context, she identifies sex, “that is, the sexuality of dominance and submission,” as “crucial, as fundamental, as on some level definitive” in the process of subordinating women to men (ibid.). This theorization brings out an important aspect of male supremacy that distinguishes itself from other forms of oppression: it is sexualized; in other words, it is experienced as

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<sup>35</sup> Examples of essentialist work that are vulnerable to these criticisms include those in the field of sexology, the “science of sex,” that developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (see, for example, Forel), including the work of Freud (see, for example, Forel, 1910); and examples from the tradition of symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism include that of Jeffrey Weeks (Weeks, 1985), Ken Plummer (Plummer, 1996) (for a devastating critique of these works, see Jeffreys, 1997/2008). Even researchers drawing on Marxism, and recognizing the importance of capital, class, and State in contextualizing social phenomena sometimes overlook the issue of how sexuality might be constructed by the power relationship between men and women (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 204).

erotically exciting, as well as used to organize relations of inequality between men and women in many other ways. According to MacKinnon, the genders of masculinity (male dominance) and femininity (female subordination) are constructed through the workings of the desire of male supremacy which eroticizes hierarchy and objectification and in this way constantly recreates the inequality necessary for its satisfaction. MacKinnon's approach "reveals" this sexuality, this "reduction of a person to a thing, to less than a human being," as "the dynamic of the inequality of the sexes" that is usually dressed up more politely as "sexual difference" (see also, Wittig, 1995). Such radical feminist understandings of sexuality, which views it as not only socially constructed but also as constructive of the political system of male supremacy, cannot regard the sex of prostitution as in any way natural or inevitable (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 208). And they also help in making the harms of prostitution more visible.

Sheila Jeffreys, in *The Idea of Prostitution*, draws on radical feminist insights to analyze what actually goes on during the "sex" of prostitution and its effects (Jeffreys, 1997/2008). Drawing on theorists such as Catherine MacKinnon, Ethel Spector Person and John Stoltenberg, she shows that in order to understand the "sex" of prostitution we need to understand a few things about male sexual desire under male supremacy. In order for prostitution to work requires the existence of a politically constructed male desire which is excited by objectification. That which is understood to be sexual in male-supremacist society is "whatever gives a man an erection" (MacKinnon, 1989, p. 130). This turns out to be "Hierarchy, a constant creation of person/thing, top/bottom, dominance/subordination relations does (ibid., p. 137). In this light, prostitution rather than being a form of "natural" sex, is actually simply an efficient way for men to achieve the excitement of eroticized hierarchy and objectification. The feminist psychoanalyst Ethel Spector Person explains in a similar way that the high male sex drive, the uncontrollable urge to "fuck" isn't the result of biological instinct but rather "the curious phenomena by which sexuality consolidates and confirms gender" (Spector, 1980). Men's need to sexually act out, to "fuck," comes from their need to reassure themselves of their masculine dominance. They need to fuck – that is, to dominate a woman in sex and through sex, to make them into an object – so that they can confirm their masculinity and reassure themselves of their membership in the male sex class. Through this process of masculine dominance, the person who is "fucked" is made not a real person (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 219). In this light, prostitution could be seen as the purest form of objectification (ibid.). If it's not just "sex" for men (i.e. for johns), it's even less for women. Studies show that prostituted women do not do their work for the sex or that they enjoy the sex (McLeod, 1982; Hoigard and Finstad, 1992). This research is supported by the many reports on the techniques that prostituted women use to numb themselves and to dissociate so that they can protect their sense of self (Hoigard and Finstad, 1992; Jeffreys, 1997/2008). One of the effects that prostituted women suffer from is stigmatization. Proponents of prostitution such as prostitutes' rights lobbyists and academics argue that this stigma arises from antiquated prejudices left over from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that removal of this stigma would cause the conditions and status of prostituted women to immediately improve. This idea that stigma is the problem is idealist though. The stigma is the product of power relations between men and women, the hierarchy of male supremacy; its origins do not lie in old-fashioned cultural attitudes (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, pp. 223-226). This means that if we want to get rid of the stigma, it's not by making prostitution more acceptable and normalizing it; it's by

abolishing it and by abolishing the wider system of male supremacy that prostitution itself arises from and helps to reinforce and reproduce.

When johns are brought into the analytical frame, and contextualized within wider relations of male supremacy, as it is in radical feminist analyses, the harms of prostitution can be discerned. There are many ways in which the prostitution of women has been understood as both resulting *from* violence and resulting *in* violence. These include “unpaid violence,” connections between childhood sexual abuse and prostitution, and “commercial sexual violence” (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, pp. 242-274). What Sheila Jeffreys calls “unpaid violence” is violence that is inflicted by the prostitution abuser or john but isn’t paid for by him (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 255). A lot of research over the past 20 years has shown that prostituted women suffer a lot of this unpaid violence. They are frequently murdered (Summers, 1988), they suffer from high rates of rape and battery from johns, and high rates of battery from pimps and partners (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, pp. 254-255). The study by Hoigard and Finstad shows that out of the 26 women interviewed 19 had experienced violence as a result of being used in prostitution (Hoigard and Finstad, 1992). Their study shows that the commonality of the experience meant that they “banalized” violence and could relate “kidnappings, confinement, rapes, and death threats as if they were normal occurrences” (Hoigard and Finstad, 1992, p. 255). Farley and Hotaling (1995) discovered in their study that 55% of their respondents had been assaulted by johns, with 19% being assaulted in the past week. 88% had experienced physical threat in prostitution, 33% in the week before they answered the questionnaire. Rape rates were high with 68% having been raped since entering prostitution, 46% by johns, and 48% had been raped more than 5 times since being prostituted. This study also found that 49% of their respondents had been badly beaten in childhood by a caregiver. Susan Hunter from the Council for Prostitution Alternatives reports from her work that prostituted women are raped once a week (Hunter, 1994). Eileen McLeod in Birmingham also reported a lot of unpaid violence. She reports (McLeod, 1982, p. 256): “Almost without exception, prostitutes I have had contact with have experienced some form of serious physical violence from their clients.” The violence isn’t necessarily to coerce the women into sex; it can also arise from frustration by the john when he can’t come, for instance (ibid., p. 54). This is just the violence that *relates* to their work; we aren’t even discussing the violence that *constitutes* their work yet.

The connection between childhood sexual abuse and prostitution is another way in which prostitution is linked to male violence. Research has shown that a high percentage of prostituted women report having been sexually abused in childhood. Evelina Giobbe of WHISPER (Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt) found in the Oral History Project that 90% of the women who participated had been subjected to “an inordinate amount of physical and sexual abuse during childhood: 90 per cent had been battered in their families; 74 per cent had been abused since the age of 3 and 14.” Of those women who had been sexually abused, 93% had been abused by a family member (Giobbe, 1990, p. 73). This sexual abuse, as Judith Herman has incisively analyzed and shown, trains women for prostitution (Herman, 1981, p. 4): “The father, in effect, forces the daughter to pay with her body for affection and care which should be freely given. In so doing, he destroys the protective bond between parent and child and initiates his daughter into prostitution.” Herman shows in *Trauma and Recovery* that that women’s experience of violence in childhood and marriage is akin to that of torture victims and this violent backdrop

forms a context in which the sexually abused child has to “develop...an identity out of an environment which defines her as a whore and a slave” (Herman, 1994, p. 100).

Reports like these point to the close connections between prostitution and male sexual violence. Radical feminism, however, doesn't stop there. One of the important arguments to come out radical feminism is that prostitution is itself a form of sexual violence. That is, as Sheila Jeffreys explains, “Instead of just pointing out that very large percentages of prostituted women were being seasoned by being sexually abused in childhood, that prostituted women suffer from johns a great amount of rape and violence, including death, that is not paid for, some feminists are asserting that prostitution constitutes sexual violence against women in and of itself” (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 259). This is a very important departure from much of the work on prostitution which highlights male violence related to prostitution but which does not depict prostitution itself as a form of male sexual violence against women. This is a line that Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad took when they concluded from their research that prostitution constituted a “gross form of violence” (Hoigard and Finstad, 1992, p. 259): “The impoverishment and destruction of women's emotional lives makes it reasonable, in our eyes, to say that customers practice gross violence against prostitutes.” Evelina Giobbe is one of the radical feminist thinkers who has most effectively argued this line. She considers prostitution to resemble most closely marital rape. She considers prostitution to resemble marriage more closely than employment because unlike the labour contract, traditional marriage and prostitution are both predicated on ownership and unconditional access to a woman's body; access to women's bodies in the workplace, by contrast, are protected by sexual harassment laws (Giobbe, 1991, p. 143). Giobbe defines traditional marriage as long-term private ownership by an individual man, and prostitution as short-term public ownership of women by many men. Prostitution is a “rental” form of exploitation and abuse rather than ownership (ibid., p. 144). Giobbe argues that, in prostitution, “crimes against women and children become a commercial enterprise.” These crimes include child sexual abuse when a man uses a prostituted juvenile, battery when a woman is used in sadomasochistic sex scenes, and sexual harassment and rape “[w]hen a john compels a woman to submit to his sexual demands as a condition of ‘employment’”. Giobbe argues that the exchange of money doesn't change the violence of the acts into something else; it's still male violence and sexual violence: “The fact that a john gives money to a woman or a child for submitting to these acts does not alter the fact that he is committing child sexual abuse, rape, and battery; it merely redefines these crimes as prostitution” (ibid., p. 146). Prostitution, Giobbe argues, is “sexual abuse because prostitutes are subjected to any number of sexual acts that in any other context, acted against any other woman, would be labelled assaultive or, at the very least, unwanted and coerced” (ibid., p. 159). Kathleen Barry, whose work is central to the feminist struggle against prostitution, follows the same line in seeing prostitution as a form of male sexual violence. She identifies the sex that men buy in prostitution as “the same sex that is disembodied, enacted on the bodies of women who, for the men, do not exist as human beings, and the men are always in control” (Barry, 1995, p. 36). Sheila Jeffreys has identified several forms of sexual violence that are involved in the male sexual behaviour of using women in prostitution (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, pp. 261-268). These include what she calls “unwanted sexual intercourse,” and sexual harassment. Unwanted sexual intercourse is those experiences of sexual intercourse in which a woman complies with a man's demands without being willing, but also without acknowledging to herself a lack of consent. This experience correlates quite well with prostitution in which women have their bodies used in ways they cannot refuse since

their livelihoods depend on it (ibid., p. 261). Feminist work on wife rape shows that not only are 14% of women have been raped by husbands and partners, but they women also endure a vast amount of unwanted sex (Russell, 1990). Russell reveals that on top of this high rate of rape, there is also a widespread submission to sexual intercourse which doesn't fall into her category of rape, and would probably be seen as consensual in most jurisdictions, and probably by most men and women involved (see also, Hite, 1981; Gavey, 1993; Jeffreys, 1993). The unwanted sexual intercourse of prostitution is only different from that which takes place in relationships because many different men are involved. Because of this, it may cause a different level of distress and require more effective methods of dissociation (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 263). This evidence points to the fact that prostitution is a form of male sexual violence against women, consistent in its effects upon the abused women with other forms of violence, particularly child sexual abuse (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 6).

Prostitution requires a supply of women who are prostituted. Given the violence and sexual violence associated with it, the sexual violence that constitutes, the stigma attached to it, and the degradation of women that it entails, trafficking has historically been, and continues to be, the key means for supplying prostitution abusers or johns vulnerable women and children to exploit and abuse. Trafficking is a form of slavery, and sexual trafficking a form of sexual slavery that lies at the basis of prostitution and its expansion worldwide (Barry, 1979, 1995; Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2009). The interconnections between prostitution and slavery do not stop there. Sheila Jeffreys, in *The Idea of Prostitution*, draws many parallels between prostitution and slavery (Jeffreys, 1997/2008). She argues that although many feminist theorists would agree that contemporary forms of prostitution do not constitute slavery, there are nonetheless significant ways in which it can be seen to resemble the elements of slavery. Drawing on Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* (Patterson, 1982), she argue that while prostitution does not usually conform with the extreme power and powerlessness of the master-slave relationship (although I would also add that some forms of prostitution, particularly those in which trafficked women are involved, certainly do), even the so-called "free" prostituted women in Western countries do seem to replicate the conditions of slave life (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 177). These conditions include: being socially isolated from wider society – suffering a "social death" – in ways that are unprecedented compared to other forms of work; being renamed by pimps before being "turned out" into prostitution; and being structured by a social relationship which, like the master-slave relation, served the purpose of enhancing the status of the owner, rather than being about the work that the enslaved or subordinated person could do and other obvious material benefits (ibid., pp. 176, 177, 178). The function of prostitution is to establish the power of the john, and it is this that distinguishes it from many other forms of work. In fact, as Pateman (1988) argues, this is the very essence of prostitution. Through their use of prostituted women, men establish their difference from and their superiority to women and this is what constitutes the excitement that prostitution holds for males when they think about and look forward to using prostituted women (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 179).

The effects of prostitution are profoundly damaging. The effects of prostitution on prostituted women are comparable to the effects upon women of sexual violence such as rape, incest, sexual harassment and marital rape (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 268). Feminist psychologists like Judith Herman have applied the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is accepted by malestream psychologists as resulting from other forms of torture and imprisonment, to incest and domestic violence (Herman, 1994). And Dee Graham uses the idea of "societal Stockholm syndrome," a

concept develop analysing the phenomenon of hostages bonding with their captors, to describe the situation of all women who live with the fear and threat of what she calls “sexual terrorism” (Graham, 1994). Giobbe has argued that prostitution resembles rape in terms of the shocking similarity of its effects, as revealed in the WHISPER Oral History Project. These effects include: feelings of humiliation, degradation, defilement, and dirtiness; establishing intimate relationships with men; experiencing hatred and disdain toward men; negative effects on their sexuality; flashbacks and nightmares; lingering fears; and deep emotional pain similar to grieving (Giobbe, 1991). Another effect she identified was suicide, reporting that figures from public hospitals show that 15% of all suicide victims are prostitutes and one survey of call girls revealed that 75% had attempted suicide. The prostituted women in Giobbe’s study blamed themselves for the damage they suffered, similar to the way battered wives routinely blame themselves. Giobbe argues that they only parallel to this trauma is that found in victims of serious sexual abuse, rape and battery (Giobbe, 1991). One of the ways in which feminists are currently seeking to demonstrate that men’s use of women constitutes sexual violence is identifying the damage done from long-term prostitution abuse as post-traumatic stress disorder (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, p. 269). Farley and Hotaling (1995) is one such study. Their objective was to provide evidence for the harm intrinsic to prostitution, and they consider that prostituted women, like victims of hostage situations and torture, suffer multiple stressors that cause PTSM. Of the 130 prostituted women that they interviewed, 57% had been sexually abused in childhood, and 41% met the criteria for diagnosis of PTSD. This compares with an incidence of PTSD of 45% to 84% among battered women in shelters, to 15% among Vietnam veterans. Hoigard and Finstad are able to describe the damage done to prostituted women in considerable detail because of in-depth interviews with women over a number of years. In terms of effects, they report: destruction of sex lives, sometimes because it simply became boring; losing the ability to orgasm; becoming hard and cold; self-hatred toward their bodies; and the inability to feel anything.

This doesn’t sound like an “empowering” “profession” that women “freely “choose.” It doesn’t even sound like “just a job,” “a job like any other.” It sounds instead like an intrinsically abusive practice that is “woman-hating” in its values, damaging to prostituted persons in its effects, and oppressive to the core.

## **PORNOGRAPHY: THE IDEOLOGY OF MALE DOMINANCE**

“Some have said that pornography is a superficial target; but, truly, this is wrong. Pornography incarnates male supremacy. It is the DNA of male dominance. Every rule of sexual abuse, every nuance of sexual sadism, every highway and byway of sexual exploitation, is encoded in it. It’s what men want us to be, think we are, make us into; how men use us; not because biologically they are men but because this is how their social power is organized. From the perspective of the political activist, pornography is the blueprint of male supremacy; it shows how male supremacy is built. The political activist needs to know the blueprint. In cultural terms, pornography is the fundamentalism, of male dominance. Its absolutism on women and sexuality, its dogma, is merciless. Women are consigned to rape and prostitution; heretics are disappeared and destroyed. Pornography is the essential sexuality of male power: of hate, of ownership, of hierarchy; of sadism, of dominance. The premises of pornography are controlling in every rape and every rape case, whenever a woman is battered or prostituted, in incest, including in incest that occurs before a child can even speak, and in murder – murders of women by husbands, lovers, and serial killers. If this is superficial, what’s deep?”  
(Dworkin, 1997, pp. 99-100)

One of the distinctive features of radical feminist critiques of pornography has been the uncompromising nature of its analysis as inherently degrading to women and as an oppressive social practice based as it is on the subordination of women (Dworkin, 1984, 1988, 1997). Andrea Dworkin argued that pornography is nothing

less than the DNA of male dominance (Dworkin, 1988). Kathleen Barry described pornography as the propaganda of woman hatred (Barry, 1979). Robin Morgan argued that “pornography is the theory, rape is the practice” (Dworkin, 1988). It is violence against women because of what is done to girls and women in the production of pornography, and it provides men with a roadmap for sexual violence because it teaches men to see women as loving and deserving of abuse (Dworkin, 1988). Pornography is “how-to” material for child molesters and rapists (Dworkin, 1988). If rape and prostitution are the practices of male dominance, pornography is the misogynistic ideology, the propaganda, that sanctions, legitimates, and incites these woman-hating practices (Millett, 1972; Dworkin, 1981, 1988; Barry, 1979; Jeffreys, 2009). In fact, even that’s not quite right because it might give the impression that pornography is somehow simply symbolic, rather than a material practice. It’s not. As radical feminists like Andrea Dworkin have taken pains to stress, pornography *happens*; it is real acts that happen to real women and children, it has real effects on those women and children, on the male consumers, and on women and children that male consumers act it out on (Dworkin, 1981, 1988).

This radical-feminist anti-pornography position was a motivating force for the women’s movement in the mid-1980s when feminist opposition to pornography was at its height. However, this is far from the dominant “commonsense” view today. This dominant “commonsense” view, promoted by pornographers, male liberal intellectuals and liberal feminists, defends and legitimates it as “speech” that has to be protected from censorship (MacKinnon, 1993; Jeffreys, 2009). This discourse is part of a wider dominant pro-pornography discourse that views pornography as “just sex,” “just fantasy,” and even as “empowering” and “sexually liberating.” This “commonsense” view is the result of a vigorous resistance against radical feminists who opposed the sexual exploitation of women and demanded the total transformation of the dominant/submissive sexuality of male-supremacy by others who promoted a “sexual freedom” which took, as its basis, the very sexuality that male power had created (Jeffreys, 1990/1991, 2009). It was championed by male free speech liberals and pornographers, and fronted by liberal feminist lawyers, academics, and intellectuals. This fissure was so wide, and the sexual freedom camp so powerfully underpinned by male liberals and pornographers in mainstream media and culture that by the 1990s the feminist anti-pornography lost its momentum, enabling the transformation of pornography into a hugely profitable and mainstream industry sector to take place largely unopposed with little interruption from the pickets and protests that characterized the previous two decades (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 63).<sup>36</sup>

One of the fundamental problems with this “commonsense” view of pornography is that it fails to problematize the notion of sexuality that pornography constructs or to analyze its social origins in the power structure of male supremacy. They treat pornography as just “sex.” The problem with this left-wing “commonsense” view of pornography, promoted by pornographers, pimps, and their lawyers and representatives who have drawn on “sexual liberation” rhetoric and discourse of the sexual revolutions of the 1920s and 1960s, is that in portraying pornography as just “sex” they fail to explain how sex itself is socially constructed out of male-supremacy

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<sup>36</sup> There is also a prominent right-wing discourse that actually opposes pornography on the grounds of immorality and indecency. Its problem lies in the fact that it opposes pornography not from a radical critique of male-supremacy, but rather from a defence of constructs that are themselves bastions of male dominance: the family and the Church. Its opposition to pornography doesn’t call the power relations of male dominance and female subordination in the “private sphere” of the family and in the institution of the church, just with its public portrayal in pornography (Dworkin, 1983).

and how it forms the basis of pornography itself. What radical feminism enables us to do is to theorize the connections between the sexual material that is pornography and the wider system of male-supremacy and its construction of sexuality that pornography is embedded within.

One of the most powerful radical feminist analyses of contemporary pornography is Robert Jensen's *Getting Off: Pornography and the End of Masculinity* (Jensen, 2007). Jensen identifies as one of the problems in having an honest discussion about pornography, is that it is often treated as a unique phenomenon: conservatives treat it as immoral; liberals defend it without evaluating it (Jensen, 2007, p. 46). Because the material is sexually explicit, people often abandon basic guidelines that they would follow when evaluating another mass media form. Jensen recounts an instance of this when he had an exchange with a liberal writer working on a book on pornography. She suggested that one of the films Jensen had analyzed in a magazine piece – *Gag Factor #10* – was considerably different from the ones she was considering. She wrote to Jensen that she “would be happy to give [him] a list of films I’ve found interesting.” The implication of her comment was that because the *Gag Factor* series is harsh and overtly misogynistic, it was somehow unfair of him to focus on it in his article. Jensen’s response was this (Jensen, 2007, p. 46): “You can rent any hundreds of similar titles and find exactly the same content. It’s the dominant part of the market. When I study films, I am not looking for what it is interesting, but for what is most commonly purchased and rented. I look at the “mainstream” of the industry, to find out what the majority of men are watching.” Jensen’s point is that while a thoughtful meditation on a small number of interesting films might be of value, of more pressing concern is the large number of films watched by men whose main criteria is not “interesting” but “sex acts on the screen that will arouse me most efficiently and allow me to masturbate to orgasm in a pleasurable fashion” (ibid., pp. 46-47). He makes the important point that “[i]t might be easier or more comforting to pretend that the pornography industry isn’t churning out thousands of overtly misogynistic films each year,” “[b]ut it’s not clear why we would want to ignore that reality if we are trying to understand the real world” (ibid., p. 47).

Another common barrier that Jensen identifies as often standing in the way of an honest discussion of pornography is what he calls “the definitional dodge” (Jensen, 2007, p. 51). The dodge usually involves some combination of (ibid.):

- It’s all a matter of taste.
- What is pornography to some is erotica to others.
- What is degrading to some is liberating to others.
- There’s no way to talk about sexually explicit that doesn’t eventually collapse into subjective judgements.
- We cannot define the term with precision, so therefore we cannot say much of anything about pornography.

Jensen argues that in his experience this retreat behind the definitional dodge is either a cynical attempt by pro-pornography forces to cut off critique before it can be voiced, or a fear-driven response by people who are unsure that they want to go where an honest confrontation with pornography will take us (Jensen, 2007, p. 52). Jensen suggests that the definitional dodge doesn’t stand up to critical scrutiny because we don’t need “bright-line rules” to begin a discussion, and in fact we could even use our conversations to refine our categories as we go along. His own suggestion is to let the market define the category: pornography, in this light, is the material sold in

pornography shops and on pornography websites, for the purpose of producing sexual arousal for mostly male consumers (Jensen, 2007, p. 53).<sup>37</sup> From a feminist point of view, we can also talk about pornography as a specific kind of sexual material that helps maintain the sexual subordination of women. As Andrea Dworkin puts it (Dworkin, 1988):

In the subordination of women, inequality itself is sexualized: made into the experience of sexual pleasure, essential to sexual desire. Pornography is the material means of sexualizing inequality; and that is why pornography is a central practice in the subordination of women.<sup>38</sup>

Dworkin also provides a way of thinking about what we could call “elements of the pornographic,” through her framework of how subordination is enacted: through hierarchy, through objectification, through submission, and through violence (Dworkin, 1988). According to Jensen, not all pornography includes all these elements, but all these elements are present in contemporary pornography (Jensen, 2007, p. 53). When pornography is approached in this way, it could be – and should be – assessed like any other form of mass media – we can study what messages it contains, how it is produced, and how it is used by people in everyday life. In other words, from a radical feminist point of view, pornography can be studied in terms of its content, its production, and its consumption (Jensen, 2007).

Jensen’s own analysis, which focussed on mainstream heterosexual pornography, sought to evaluate whether or not pornography (in the first sense of being a description of a type of material easily identifiable in the market) was pornographic (in the feminist sense of being an expression of male-supremacist sexual ideology).

The power in Jensen’s analysis lies in part because he refuses to turn away from the blatant misogyny that he finds in mainstream heterosexual pornography. He argues that one of the reasons for why we find it so hard to have an honest discussion of pornography its blatant misogyny is so in contradiction with the myth in our society that we place women on a pedestal. As he explains (Jensen, 50):

We can all see how men hate women and children by a simple observation: No society would let happens to women and children in this culture if at some level

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<sup>37</sup> This doesn’t define the term with absolute precision, but it is sufficiently clear to make conversation possible.

<sup>38</sup> The anti-pornography ordinance that Catherine MacKinnon drew up for the state of Minnesota defined pornography in this way

(<http://www.nostatusquo.com/ACLU/dworkin/other/ordinance/newday/T2c.htm>):

Pornography is the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words that also includes one or more of the following: (i) women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities; or (ii) women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy pain or humiliation; or (iii) women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or (iv) women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or (v) women are presented in postures or positions of sexual submission, servility, or display; or (vi) women’s body parts---including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, or buttocks---are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts; or (vii) women are presented as whores by nature; or (viii) women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or (ix) woman are presented in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.

it did not have contempt for them. We allow women and children to be raped at a rate that can lead to no other conclusion except that we place a lesser value on their lives.

Men have a stake in believing that we are not really like that. Women have a stake in believing that men really don't see them that way. For each party, facing the truth often feels as if it is too much to bear. So we turn away and pretend.

And that's why this culture is so afraid of pornography. The woman-hating in pornography is right there, on the surface, fixed forever on the printed page, the film stock, the videotape, the DVD, the computer chip. Pornography is the mirror of the way this culture haes women and children, which is why it is important that we look at it, honestly.

Analyzing heterosexual pornography, he shows that, regardless of whether they are feature or gonzo (the two major styles of pornography), it reduces women to sexual objects who exist purely for men's pleasure and who have no agency except if they conform to this);<sup>39</sup> and they adhere to a script that consistently places the woman in a subordinate position to the man who occupies a dominant position. His analysis of gonzo shows that it is trending toward more and more forms of what Gail Dines calls "body-punishing sex"; it makes use of sexual practices that are unsanitary and degrading such as ass-to-mouth (ATM), and other practices that women would not engage in or to the same extent as it is in pornography such double penetration, double anal, and double vag; it uses a denigrating language that marks women as sluts, whores, cunts, nasty bitches, and so on; and it includes scenes of women in discomfort and pain, with men paying no regard to their health or well-being. It shows, in other words, a cruelty toward women by men that is stark, blatant, and misogynistic.

One of the defences to this blatant misogyny by pro-pornography advocates is that features are more egalitarian than gonzo. Jensen shows, however, that although there are overt differences in terms of type of sexual activity and overt denigration between the two, both share the same three rules: All women always want sex from all men, and the sexual they want are the ones that men demand, and any woman who doesn't immediately recognize her true sexual nature will understand as soon as sex is forced upon her. He shows that although there are two major styles to pornography – the feature and gonzo – they contain similarities which include: misogynistic messages being present in both; both adhere to a formula in which women are reduced to passive objects and men being privileged as the dominant and active subjects. He concludes his analysis of content arguing that (Jensen, 2007, p. 64): "At its most basic level, contemporary mass-marketed heterosexual pornography – feature or gonzo – is

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<sup>39</sup> The basic themes that are common to all mass-market heterosexual pornography are (Jensen, 2007, pp. 56-57):

- All women at all times want sex from all men;
- Women like all the sexual acts that men perform or demand; and
- Any woman who does not at first realize this can be easily turned with a little force. Such force is rarely necessary, however, for most women in pornography are "nymphomaniacs" that men fantasize about.

The message isn't just that women choose this kind of sex, but that it is their nature, part of being a woman – sex is what they are. For instance, the text of a banner for the website suckmebitch.com, which promises "raw & uncut real home blowjob videos," expresses this succinctly: "Make her feel like a real woman. Just say the magic words...Suck Me Bitch" (cited in Jensen, 2007, p. 57).

the presentation of the objectified female body for the sexual satisfaction of men.” He also adds that (ibid.): “I use the term “female body” in that sentence instead of “woman” consciously: In pornography women are not fully human. In pornography, women are three holes and two hands. The essence of a woman is those parts of a woman is those parts of her body that can produce sexual stimulation in men.

Radical feminists have also analyzed the way in which contemporary pornography is not only sexist, but also racist as well. This isn’t just subtle, coded racism; this is old-fashioned US-type racism – stereotypical representations of the sexually primitive black male stud, the animalistic black woman, the hot Latina, the Asian geisha (Jensen, 2007, pp. 65-66; see also, Dines, 2006, 2010). Pornography is one area in which this blatant racism is actually alive and well and even thriving. This racism is so pervasive that it goes largely unnoticed, much less challenged. This genre is called “interracial,” which implies cross-cultural understanding and cooperation but is actually something quite different (Jensen, 2007, p. 66): “For example, the director of the Black Attack Gang Bang line of films explains: “My mission is to find the cutest white honeys to get Gang Banged by some hard pipe hitting niggas straight outta Compton!”” The most incisive analysis of this genre of “interracial” pornography comes from Gail Dines, who concludes that interracial pornography of this sort is a new kind of “minstrel show.” As she explains it functions as (Dines, 2006, p. 296):

a peepshow for whites into what they see as the authentic black life, not on the plantation, but in the “hood” where all the conventions of white civilized society cease to exist. The “hood” in the white racist imagination is a place of pimps, hos and generally uncontrolled black bodies, and the white viewer is invited, for a fee, to slum in this world of debauchery. In the “hood,” the white man can dispense with his whiteness by identifying with the black man, and thus can become as sexually skilled and as sexually out-of-control as the black man. Here he does not have to worry about being big enough to satisfy the white woman (or man), nor does he have to concern himself with fears about poor performance or “weak wads” or cages like poor hubby in Blacks on Blondes. Indeed, the “hood” represents liberation from the cage, and the payoff is a satiated white woman (or man) who has been completely and utterly feminized by being well and truly turned into a “fuckee.”

Dines points out that while this interracial pornography could be construed as empowering and liberatory, it can only be seen as so in abstraction: in actual context, the black body that is celebrated as uncontrolled in interracial pornography is the same body needs to be controlled and disciplined in the real world of white supremacy (Dines, 2006, p. 297):

Just as white suburban teenagers love to listen to hip-hop and white adult males gaze longingly at the athletic prowess of black men, the white pornography consumer enjoys his identification with (and from) black males through a safe peephole, in his own home, and in mediated form. The real, breathing, living black man, however, is to be kept as far away as possible from these living rooms, and every major institution in society marshals its forces in the defense of white society. The ideologies that white men take to the pornography text to enhance their sexual pleasure are the very ideologies that they use to legitimize

the control of black men: while it may heighten arousal for the white porn user, it makes life intolerable for the real body that is (mis)represented in all forms of white controlled media.

She goes on to argue that (ibid.):

To ignore the racist codings of black men in pornography in favor of a simplistic, decontextualized reading of the pornographic text as subversive is to operate in a world of white privilege where being a “fucker” is a status symbol with no real-world burden. This burden belongs instead to the black male and, of course, the entire black community, and as long as academic discourse continues to assume a de-racialized woman or man, then our work will have little meaning outside of the few who have access to elite academic institutions. Meanwhile, the pornography industry can continue, unencumbered by academic or cultural criticism, to produce images that make *Birth of a Nation* look like the good old days.

Dines (2006) analyzed interracial pornography involving men, but those which stereotype other non-white peoples are equally problematic, equally racist: there are vast genres of pornography based upon the racist stereotyping of Asian women and men; Latinas, American Indian women (the sexually primitive squaw), Muslim women, amongst many others.

One of the standard practices that Robert Jensen critically analyzes is the “cum shot.” He recognizes that it isn’t purely a pornographic practice, but he asks why it is the near-universal ending of all pornography. He points out that some answers come from the films themselves, like the 1990 release of *Taboo VIII* in which one of the male actors offers an answer. When this man refuses the request of a woman (whom he feels is a slut) to have intercourse with her, he tells her, “I don’t fuck sluts. I jerk off on them. Take it or leave it.” This suggests that the cum shot is a way of turning women into sluts – something, not really someone – whose purpose is to be sexual with men. Jensen also points out that this assessment is echoed by a veteran of the pornography industry, who told an interviewer (quoted in Jensen, 2007, pp. 70-71):

I’d like to really show what I believe the men want to see: violence against women. I firmly believe that we serve a purpose by showing that. The most violent we can get is the cum shot in the face. Men get off behind that, because they get even with the women they can’t have. We try to inundate the world with orgasms in the face.

One of the disturbing trends that Jensen analyzes is the increasing violence and misogyny of gonzo. The sex is getting more violent, degrading practices like ATM and bukkake are becoming more standard, and pornographers are pushing the boundaries in an effort to increase their sales. It is a trend which is based on men finding the infliction of pain and degradation of women sexually exciting and a factor that can enhance their sexual pleasure. It is a trend that is based, in other words, on an increasing callousness and cruelty on the part of men.

When faced with this kind of critique, industry defenders often use the defence of “Pornography is just fantasy” (Jensen, 2007, p. 76). This overlooks, however, as Andrea Dworkin points out, that pornography is not fantasy; that instead, it *happens*: the acts on the screen happened to real women; the acts of cruelty and degradation

happened to real women; they are events that took place in the real world; those things happened to those women; those women are real, not fantasy. This defence also fails to ask the question, if it's just fantasy, why these fantasies? Why fantasies of cruelty and degradation? What do they tell us about not only pornography but also the real world that pornography is embedded within?

When analyzing the production of pornography, the same rationalizations that are also deployed to justify prostitution pop up. The arguments are that women “chose” to do pornography, that it is “empowering,” even “sexually liberating” are used. They share the same limitations that we covered in the critique of prostitution: they fail to consider the objective material constraints to women’s exercise of choice and also how these objective conditions come to influence their own subjective understanding of the choices that are open to them and their rationalizations of these choices. Jensen makes the point that a meaningful discussion of choice can’t be restricted to the single moment when a woman decides to perform a specific pornographic film; it has to include all the background conditions that affect not only the objective choices she faces but her subjective assessment of those choices (Jensen, 2007, p. 87). He points out that there is not much systematic research on the women who perform in pornography but from the research and the testimony of women who have been prostituted – some of whom are also used in pornography – we know that childhood sexual assault (which often leads victims to their value in the world primarily as the ability to provide sexual pleasure to men); we know women in the sex industry – not all, but many – routinely dissociate to cope with what they do (in one study 68% of the 130 prostitutes used met the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder; and we know that pimps often use coercion and violence to keep women working as prostitutes. We also know that the most common reason women enter prostitution is because of dire economic circumstances, and we know that it is actually very hard for prostituted women to get out of prostitution through prostitution (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2009). In such situations, we need to ask whether women working in them are making a meaningful choice. Jensen argues that there is no simple answer to this question; recognizing this complexity does not mean we are treating the women as children, ignoring their agency, or constructing them as dupes (Jensen, 2007, p. 87). Regardless of whether reliable information is available to the male consumer, there is still the reality that in an industry that is profitable and a large number of women are needed to make films, it is certain that such numbers of women will be choosing under conditions that make the concept of “free choice” virtually meaningless (ibid., p. 88). In such a context, male consumption of pornography still fuels demand for an industry in which some women will be used – that is, hurt in some fashion, psychologically and/or physically – no matter what he thinks or knows about a specific woman (ibid.).

Jensen’s move to draw parallels between pornography and prostitution are important because there are very intimate connections between them. Like prostitution, pornography has as its basis a background of child sexual abuse, male violence against women that seasons them for it; like prostitution, the bulk of its supply of women lies in the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation; and like prostitution, the sexual exploitation is masked by a cash nexus, justified through liberal ideology, that women engaging in pornography are acting out their “free choice.” In fact, some radical feminists argue that pornography *is* prostitution: the only difference is that it is photographed or filmed (Dworkin, 1988; Jeffreys, 2009). Catherine MacKinnon, both before and after Andrea Dworkin’s untimely death, has consistently challenged the idea that pornography is just speech or *Only Words*

(MacKinnon, 1993). Instead, it is a political practice that subordinates women and an essential and inseparable part of the industry of prostitution and a form of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. As she explains (Jensen, 2009, p. 65): “In material reality, pornography is one way women and children are trafficked for sex. To make visual pornography, the bulk of the industry’s products, real women and children, and some men, are rented out for use in commercial sex acts. In the resulting materials, these people are then conveyed and sold for the buyer’s sexual use.” This means that pornography is “technologically sophisticated slave traffic” that is allowed “because its victims are regarded as socially worthless” (ibid., p. 112). In this light, pornography may be a particularly severe form of prostitution in terms of the harms that the women prostituted in this practice experience (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 65).

The consumption side of pornography production and use is just as disturbing as its content and production. Pornography industry promoters like to sell the idea that women are just as interested in pornography than men – and it is true that, as a result of the growth and normalization of pornography, more women than ever participate in pornography consumption – but they are well aware that the bulk of their consumers are male. Like many other questions to do with pornography, there are no reliable statistics on the male/female breakdown for pornography use but Robert Jensen reports that in his interviews over the past decade with pornography producers and sellers, the lowest figure on this has been 80% (Jensen, 2007, p. 98). This indicates that although more women are consuming pornography than ever before, it is clear that contemporary pornography predominantly reflects the male sexual imagination rooted in a dominant conception of masculinity: sex as control, conquest, domination, and the acquisition of pleasure through the taking of women (ibid.).

When evaluating the effects of pornography consumption on attitudes and behaviours, defenders of pornography often try to evade it by framing the question as: “Does pornography cause rape?” That’s not a very useful question because it reduces the issue to establishing a direct causal link between the two. Clearly, pornography doesn’t cause rape in this way because some men who use pornography do not rape and some rapists do not use pornography. The more useful question, which Robert Jensen, asks is: “Is pornography ever a factor that contributes to rape?” Here, feminists have compiled considerable evidence in support of the idea that it does. Diana Russell, for instance, based on both lab research and interviews with men and women, has argued that pornography is a causal factor in the way that it can: predispose some men to desire rape or intensify this desire; undermine some males’ internal inhibitions against acting out rape desires; undermine some male’s social inhibitions against acting out rape desires; and, undermine some potential victims’ abilities to avoid or resist rape (Russell, 1998). Jensen himself, drawing on the public testimony of women (MacKinnon and Dworkin, 1993), concludes that pornography can: be an important factor in shaping a male-dominant view of sexuality; be used to initiate victims and break down their resistance to sexual activity; contribute to a user’s difficulty in separating sexual fantasy and reality; and, provide a training manual for abusers (Jensen, 2007, p. 105). These arguments focus on the effects of pornography consumption on the male consumers, but we must not forget when discussing effects that if pornography is a form of prostitution – that is, a form of male sexual violence against women (Giobbe, 1993; Jeffreys, 1997/2008), a form of “serial rape” (MacKinnon, 2013) – then the debate of whether pornography causes rape is moot because pornography *is* rape.

Another aspect of pornography consumption that needs to be considered in any critical evaluation is the effect pornography use has on men who don’t rape – that is,

on “normal” men and on their “ordinary” relationships with women. Jensen asks pertinent questions on this issue: “What effect does it have on men who don’t rape? That is, could the sexual attitudes of non-rapists also be affected? Could habitual use of pornography be a factor in shaping the attitudes of men that lead them to treat their consensual partners with callousness and disrespect? In a society in which men are already being taught in many other venues that sex is about conquest, control and domination – could pornography that has those same values help reinforce such values?” He explains that they can. It helps to reinforce the boorish male-dominant attitude that sex was about gaining women’s consent to sex in whatever way one could, the tendency to focus on sex and to ignore other aspects of intimacy, the relentless demands/requests for sex, and the practice of trying to corner women so that it is easier for women to engage in sex that keep resisting (Jensen, 2007, p. 109). This problematization of “normal” guys starts to break down the distinction between “good guys” and “bad guys” that we normally use to make distinctions between rapists and non-rapists because of the acknowledgement that both arise from a rape culture that makes rape inviting and that socially constructs male sexual behaviour as based on conquest, domination and control. The psychologist Ana Bridges, who specializes in the impact of pornography use on romantic relationships also provides convincing evidence that pornography harms heterosexual relationships both indirectly, by affecting the attitudes and emotions of viewers, and indirectly, by negatively influencing ratings and appraisals of a romantic partner (Bridges, Bergner and Hesson-McInnis, 2003). On all these fronts – content, production, and consumption – radical feminist analysis points to pornography being sexual material that helps maintain the sexual subordination of women.

I want to come back to the harms women suffer in the production of pornography to follow up on the radical feminist idea that pornography *is* prostitution – a form of male sexual violence against women (Jeffreys, 1997/2008). Defenders of pornography try to depict it as just ‘fantasy’ and ‘speech’ but the fact is live girls and women do have their orifices penetrated to produce pornography. They take drugs to survive the pain and humiliation, and they bleed (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 76). Pornography produces harms that are similar to other types of prostitution, which include abraded vaginas and anuses, and considerable pain (Holden, 2005). They include the physical harms of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, infertility, diseases of the reproductive tract that lead to complications in later life, and psychological harms (ibid.; Farley, 2003). Many pornography movies are routinely made without condoms, despite the fact that stories come out regularly about production companies failing to carry out regular testing and actors several pornography actors having been found to be HIV positive and passing on HIV on set to others (Jeffreys, 2009; Los Angeles Times, 2010). Most girls who work in the industry are exploited and left poor by the time they finish or are no longer wanted for work as Rob Stallone, who runs Star World Modelling, a pornography pimping business comments (quoted in Hopkins, 2007, in Jeffreys, 2009, p. 76): “An 18-20 year old girl, is her life ruined by doing this? Ninety percent of them, yeah. They make their \$1000 a day, then they’re out of the business and they don’t have 20 cents.” There is growing number of porn star biographies available that give some information about the conditions the women experience. Though they are usually written for pornography consumers and rarely critical of the industry, they give some insights into the abusive conditions that make it up. As Raffaella Anderson explains (quoted in Poulin, 2005, p. 138, translated by Jeffreys, 2009, p. 77):

Take an inexperienced girl, who does not speak the language, far from home, sleeping in a hotel or on the set. Made to undergo a double penetration, a fist in her vagina plus a fist in her anus, sometimes at the same time, a hand up her arse, sometimes two. You get a girl in tears, who pisses blood because of lesions, and she craps herself too because no one explained to her that she needed to have an enema...After the scene which the girls have no right to interrupt they have two hours rest.

Because of such serious harms, Richard Poulin calls pornography the “aestheticization of sexual violence” (ibid.). The biographies suggest that the girls involved have been made vulnerable by histories of sexual violence (Lovelace, 1987; Lords, 2003; Canyon, 2004).

When feminists were first articulating radical critiques of prostitution before the 1980s, they took it to be a sign of women’s subordination that would cease to exist when women gained equality. This isn’t what has happened though. Instead, it has been constructed as the basis for a massive global sexual-exploitation market sector that is enjoying huge profits and expanding on an unprecedented scale. Understanding prostitution and pornography also requires an understanding of the broad outlines of this global political-economy. In what follows, I try to give a sense of these political-economic contours and, where possible, the role that accounting itself might be playing in its processes.

## **PORNOGRAPHY AND PROSTITUTION TODAY: INDUSTRIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION GONE GLOBAL**

“Howard Stern regularly features porn on his show; and for this he was the second-highest paid celebrity in the world in 2006; Hugh Hefner’s life, with his blonde, young, and embarrassingly naive “girlfriends,” is the topic of the hugely popular *The Girls Next Door* on E! Entertainment; retired mega-porn star Jenna Jameson, is featured in a four-page article in *Rolling Stone* in May 2009 and appears in a Steven Soderbergh movie. Kevin Smith’s movie *Zack and Miri Make A Porno* is warmly received by movie critics; pole dancing is a widely popular form of exercise; students at the University of Maryland show a porn movie on campus; and Indiana University invites pornographer Joanna angel to address a human sexuality class. I could go on, but these examples illustrate how porn has seeped into our everyday world and is fast becoming such a normal part of our everyday lives that it barely warrants a mention.”

(Dines, 2010, p. ix)

When anti-porn and anti-prostitution radical feminism first emerged in the 1970s and 80s on the back of a powerful feminist movement at the peak of its powers (the so-called ‘Second Wave’), pornography and prostitution were shady businesses associated with organized crime, the underworld, and the backrooms and backstreets (Dines, 2010). Back then, both were already multi-million dollar businesses (Dworkin, 1988, 1997), but they didn’t enjoy the popularity, legitimacy and growth that they enjoy today. Today, the situation is completely different. They are still associated with organized crime, but their rapid growth as part of a sexual-exploitation industry that has been globalized has meant unprecedented economic growth and expansion for the industry and, along with these record profits, a growing respectability and investment from mainstream businesses. In what follows, I discuss some of the key features of the sexual-exploitation industry’s globalization, its size, its major sectors, economic and political preconditions, and the role that accounting might be playing within it.

## THE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION OF PROSTITUTION

Kathleen Barry notes that, since 1970, “the most dramatic changes in prostitution have been its industrialization, normalization, and widespread global diffusion” (Barry, 1995, p. 122). Sheila Jeffreys, in one of the few books that have actually addressed the international political economy of the global sex industry as a whole, *The Industrial Vagina*, defines industrialization in the context of prostitution’s global diffusion as “the ways in which traditional forms of the organization of prostitution are being changed by economic and social forces to become large scale and concentrated, normalized and part of the mainstream corporate sphere” (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 3).<sup>40</sup> The result of this industrialization has been “a multibillion-dollar global market in women, at home and abroad, in highly organized trafficking and in the most diffused, informal arrangements” (Barry, 1995, p. 122).

In some parts of Asia, the industrialization of prostitution has taken place in the form of massive prostitution areas within cities. In Daulutadia, a port city in Bangladesh formed 25 years ago, 1,600 women are sexually used by 3,000 men daily (Hammond, 2008). A 1998 ILO Report offers powerful evidence to suggest that prostitution was organized on quite a new scale and integrated into national economies in significant ways in the 1990s. As Lin Leam Lin comments (Lim, 1998, p. vi):

Prostitution has changed recently in some SE Asian countries. The scale of prostitution has been enlarged to an extent where we can justifiably speak of a commercial sex sector that is integrated into the economic, social and political life of these countries. The sex business has assumed the dimensions of an industry and has directly or indirectly contributed in no small measure to employment, national income and economic growth.<sup>41</sup>

The result of this global industrialization process is that prostitution is now a significant market sector within national economies, although the worth of domestic sex industries are hard to estimate given the size of the illegal industry and the general lack of transparency surrounding it. The most highly developed and entrenched industries are those where militaries such as the US and Japan in the 1930s and 1940s set up on a scale and with a precision that is industrial, such as Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand (Moon, 1997; Tanaka, 2002). The ILO report estimated that the sex industry accounts for 2-14% of the worth of the economies of the four countries studied (Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia). The Korean government estimated that at any one time, one million women were in prostitution (Hurt, 2005). The Korean prostitution industry is estimated to be 4.4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is more than forestry, fishing and agriculture combined (4.1%). This was said to be a conservative estimate since many of the forms of prostitution were untrackable. It was estimated that 1 in 6 and 1 in 10 women in the country have worked in some capacity in prostitution (ibid.). The sex industry in the Netherlands, which legalized brothel prostitution in 2001, has been estimated to be worth 5% of

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<sup>40</sup> This book traces how prostitution “has been transformed from a socially despised form of abuse of women into a hugely profitable and either legal or tolerated international industry” by looking at the “globalization of prostitution” and “examining the ways in which the global sex industry has been integrated into the international political economy” (ibid.).

<sup>41</sup> This report is broadly positive about this development as good for the economies of these countries, arguing that prostitution should be recognized as legitimate by governments because of its profitability, even if they do not go so far as to legalize it (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 4).

GDP (Daley, 2001). In China the boom in the prostitution industry is notable because since it has had to develop from a low base in the Maoist era when prostitution was not tolerated. There are now an estimated 200,000-300,000 prostituted women in Beijing alone and anywhere between 10 million and 20 million prostituted women in China as a whole (Zhou, 2006). The industry is estimated at 8% of the Chinese economy, and worth about US\$700 billion (ibid.). This globalization of prostitution and of the sex industry more widely has involved, in terms of material processes of production (Jeffreys, 2009):

- The industrial organization of prostitution through military prostitution (Enloe, 1983, 1989);
- The embedding of prostitution within the international economy in many ways;<sup>42</sup>
- The emergence of a new form of sexual colonization whereby prostitutes from rich countries are engaging in the prostitution of women from poor countries;<sup>43</sup>
- The increased movement of prostituted women facilitated by new technologies such as air travel;
- The globalization of the pornography industry;
- The expansion and industrialization of sex tourism;
- The rise of the strip club boom;
- The enabling of the pornography industry, sex tourism, the mail order bride business and other forms of business by the Internet to globally expand and interrelate;
- The globalization of prostitution through the process of economic development in countries that have been previously organized on subsistence, with particular forms of prostitution being exported to particular sites of industrial development in ‘poor’ countries such as Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (Wardlow, 2007; UNESCAP, 2007); and
- The internationalization of the supply chain with large-scale trafficking of women from poor continents on every country into destinations that include their richer neighbours i.e. Nepal to India, North Korea to China, and to western sex tourism destinations such as Germany and the Netherlands;<sup>44</sup> and
- The integration of the sex industry into the sectors of mainstream business in unprecedented ways (Jeffreys, 2009; Dines, 2010).

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<sup>42</sup> Sheila Jeffreys lists some of the most important. These include (Jeffreys, 2009): through the trafficking in women (pp. 5, 152-172); by enabling US pornography and strip club companies such as Spearmint Rhino and the Hustler chain, and the organized crime that is typically connected with them, to make profits from products and venues in many countries (p. 5); and through the flow-on effects whereby it isn’t just brothel and strip club owners and newly respectable pornography companies that profit, but also hotels and airlines who benefit from sex tourism, taxi drivers who drive male buyers to and from brothels and strip bars, bouncers and valets of strip clubs, businesses who service strippers with costume and make-up, drink companies who supply the alcoholic drinks at these places, and so on (ibid.).

<sup>43</sup> This is taking place through the mail order bride industry, amongst other avenues (Jeffreys, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> The trafficking of women, for instance, has become valuable to many national economies because of the remittances trafficked women send home to the home country. Governments like that of the Philippines have encouraged the trade by providing training for women before they leave. In 2004, Filipinas in Japan sent home \$258 million (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 5). 8. 80,000 Filipinas entered Japan in 2004 on 6-month entertainment visas, of whom up to 90% were required to work in the sex industry (ibid.).

These material political-economic developments have needed, as their symbolic preconditions, certain dominant ideologies that have legitimated them and enabled their emergence, diffusion and spread. These dominant ideologies, interacting with each other, include:

- The hegemonic economic ideology of neoliberalism put forward by Milton Friedman and others that has served as the philosophical and theoretical foundation of the neoliberal political-economic reforms worldwide for the past 30 years (Jeffreys, 2009; Harvey, 2005);
- The pro-prostitution and pro-pornography ideology of “sexual liberation” that emerged and became dominant among the male-dominated liberal and socialist left in the 1960s (Jeffreys, 2009, 1990/1991, 1993a); and
- The ideology of liberal feminism that, aligning itself with pornographers and pimps, defended pornography as “speech,” began seeing prostitution as “empowering” and as a legitimate “job” that women can “choose” (Jeffreys, 2009, 1993; Leidholdt and Raymond, 1990)

The political-economy of the global sexual-exploitation industry is made up of the following major elements or sectors that are interconnected and integrated with each other in important ways (Jeffreys, 2009):

- The **marriage trafficking sector** consisting of forms of servile marriage that are “harmful cultural practices” (Jeffreys, 2005, 2009), including that of the mail order bride industry (Jeffreys, 2009);
- The **military prostitution sector** which played a vital role in initially organizing and industrializing prostitution at the places where national militaries and occupying militaries were placed (Enloe, 1983, 1989; Jeffreys, 2009);
- A **global pornography industry sector** that has expanded its scope and is enjoying record profits (Dines, 2010; Poulin, 2005; Jeffreys, 2009);
- A **strip club sector** that has been booming on the back of the industrialization of prostitution and the normalization of pornography through mainstream media and popular culture (Jeffreys, 2009, 2005);
- A **prostitution tourism sector** that is now a substantial part of many national economies and that is truly global in terms of both supply (i.e. prostituted women and children) and demand (i.e. prostitutes or johns) (Jeffreys, 1999, 2009);
- The **international trafficking sector** that now forms the major source of supply of prostituted women into the global sex industry (Barry, 1979, 1995);
- The **patriarchal state (the state as pimp)** which has legalized prostitution in some countries (i.e. Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand), and, in various important ways, plays – and continues to play – a vital role in facilitating the growth, legitimation, and diffusion of both national and international sex industries<sup>45</sup> (Jeffreys, 2009)

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<sup>45</sup> To say that the state is patriarchal and pimp is not to say that the state is this monolithic institution that has no space for progressive reforms. It is, and can be if the balance of social and class forces shift in that direction. In some places such as Sweden, often as a result of feminist struggles, the state has

Like other business sectors, it is simply impossible for the global sex industry to have industrialized, globalized in the way that it has without accounting playing a role in its development. As the indispensable management costing and financial reporting practice for “appraising the terms of exchange between social constituencies (and by) arbitrating, evaluating and adjudicating social choices” (Tinker, 1985, p. 81), and for holding labour ‘accountable’ to capital (Bryer, 2006), accounting is central to restructuring organizational labour processes (Carter and Tinker, 2006; Cole and Cooper, 2006; McKinley and Wilson, 2006), and capitalism’s globalizing process of capital accumulation (Tinker, 1980; Cooper, 1980; Neu, 2001; Everett, 2003; Harvey, 2010). Given the centrality of accounting to business organizational life as well as to processes of (capitalist) globalization, it *has* to have played a substantive role in facilitating their development. In the following discussion, which elaborates on the characteristics of the above sectors of the global sex industry I try to call attention where I can, to the potential role that accounting might have been or is playing in its emergence, development, and expansion.

## **THE GLOBAL SEX INDUSTRY AND THE ROLE OF ACCOUNTING WITHIN IT**

Accounting, as a social practice, with both material and symbolic dimensions, with a role in both production and consumption (Everett, 2003; Harvey, 1996, 2010), is fundamental to capitalism’s globalizing process of capital accumulation and social reproduction (Tinker, 1980, 1984, 1985; Cooper, 1980; Neu, 2001; Bryer, 2006). In what follows, I expand on the sectors of the global sexual-exploitation industry outlined above. In order to discuss accounting’s possible role in the global sexual-exploitation industry’s development, I’ve tried to keep in mind Marxian political-economy’s insights about accounting’s disciplinary function in enforcing the subordination of labour (Armstrong, 1987; Bryer, 2006), its distributional role in mediating and reproducing capitalism’s unequal class relations (Tinker, 1980, 1985) and its ideological function in constructing a dominant capitalist class hegemony by homogenizing, naturalizing and universalizing social practices in a manner that masks underlying unequal class relations (Cooper, 1980, p. 163), as well as Neu and Graham’s (2003) important insight that accounting, in its institutional role as a calculative and governability practice, plays a vital role in structuring, regulating and standardizing the flow of things across time and space that make up the process of organizational and social reproduction. These flows include flows of capital, flows of products, flows of information, flows of policies and flows of people (pp. 453-456, 456-457, 457-461, 461-464, 464-466). Alongside this, because of the nature of the subject (the global sexual-exploitation industry), I’ve also tried to keep in mind the specific role that accounting plays in not only legitimizing and reproducing capitalism,

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been pushed to implement policies that have reduced male sexual demand for prostitution by criminalizing the buyers (Jeffreys, 2009). The naming of state of “patriarchal” and “pimp” is important though to call attention to the way in which it has facilitated the buying and selling of women that prostitution is and to the more general way in which it props male supremacy through economic, social, and cultural policies that safeguards and legitimates male dominance (MacKinnon, 1993).

but also male supremacy by masking its unequal relations that underpin its construction of gender and sexuality.

## **MARRIAGE TRAFFICKING**

One of the effects of capitalist globalization has been the intrusion of traditional forms of servile marriage into the west (Jeffreys, 2009; Harvey, 2010). The clearest example of this is the mail order bride industry, which involves men acquiring brides from poor countries like the Philippines and Russia through commercial agencies that profit from trade (Jeffreys, 2009, pp. 46-47). They might order a bride that they've never seen or go on tours organized by agencies to select a bride. The proliferation of companies and the growth of the industry now makes it a significant player in the international sex industry (Demleitner, 2000). In some cases, the women have to pay the companies money to have their profiles advertised on company websites, and may even find themselves in debt to companies for travel costs, which they might struggle to pay off if the husband does not allow them access to money (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 47). The UN Trafficking Rapporteur's report for 2007 calls attention to the seriousness of the mail order bride trade as a form of trafficking (UNHRC, 2007a, p. 18).<sup>46</sup>

Mail order brides find themselves in highly unequal relations in terms of economic dependency, lack of language skills and cultural knowledge, isolation from families, friends and other forms of support, and in constant awareness that if they leave the marriage they may be repatriated, and lose any advantage that they might have gained from their experience (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 47). The harms also appear to include a greater chance of being battered or murdered as some high profile murder cases in the US in the last decade have shown (ibid.; Terzieff, 2007).

The mail order bride industry is the most obviously commercialized form of marriage trafficking and most obviously linked to the global sex industry. As Sheila Jeffreys explains (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 48): "The relationship with prostitution is clear, as impoverished women from poor countries give unknown men whom they have no affectional interest and for whom they have no desire their domestic and reproductive labour and sexual access to their bodies to escape from dire economic circumstances." The mail order bride industry was already around before the 1990s, but its scale and efficiency was restricted by snail mail. This all changed with the Internet. As Schaeffer-Grabiell (2006, p. 331) explains: "When the mail-order bride industry shifted from using a magazine format to operating over the Internet during the 1990s, the number...providing matchmaking services exploded and spread from Russia and Asia into Latin America." Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights estimates that the number of companies rose from 200 in 1999 to 500 in 2005, with 4000-6000 foreign spouses entering the US each year through the mediation of international marriage brokers (Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, 2007). This industry is taking root in rich countries where men seek foreign spouses, and not just in the US and western countries. In Taiwan, for instance, there is a considerable providing 'wives' for Taiwanese men. Taiwanese men pay up to US\$10,000 for trips to China, Indonesia or Vietnam to acquire 'brides' (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 48). And it's not just happening in rich countries. Bride selling as a part of the trafficking of women into sexual exploitation

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<sup>46</sup> The term "mail order bride" has been rejected by some feminist commentators for representing women as commodities and being insulting to women who marry in this fashion (see, for example, Demleitner, 2000), and interestingly they use similar language of "choice" and "agency" to that is being used to justify other forms of prostitution (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 47).

is growing around the world, and particularly in Asia and the Middle East (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 50). The trade in wives from North Korea to China is an example. It is estimated that more than 100,000 North Koreans have migrated illegally to China in the past decade, with 80-90% of women becoming trafficking victims (Davis, 2006). The mail order bride industry is only one of a number of forms of servile marriage that are forms of prostitution. Forced marriage, child marriage, and temporary marriage are others (Jeffreys, 2009, pp. 53-56, 56-59, 59-61). The UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery recognizes forced marriage as a form of contemporary slavery, a form of trafficking, and a form of sexual exploitation (UNHRC, 2007a). The 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery that the group monitors includes in its definition of slavery any institution or practice whereby “[a] woman, without the right to refuse, is promise or given marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family, or any other person or group” (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 53). This extends to situations where “[t]he husband of a woman, his family or clan, has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise” and where “[a] woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person” (ibid.). It also includes child marriage in the clause identifying as slavery “[a]ny institution or practice whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years, is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour” (ibid.) This is a huge social problem as in some countries child marriage is on the rise.

An interesting thing about the UN Trafficking Rapporteur’s report is that it casts doubt on the possibility making a distinction between forced and arranged marriage: “The Special Rapporteur is concerned that in some cases the difference between arranged and forced marriage is tenuous” (UNHRC, 2007a, p. 26). This is consistent with an increasing criticality on the part of some feminist scholars to the way arranged marriage has been traditionally defended by ‘progressive’ scholars on culturally relativistic grounds (Okin, 1999; Nussbaum, 2000). In the UK, the practice of arranged marriage is falling substantially among the younger generations of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian communities in which it is most commonly practised, but some parents are turning to forced marriage to deal with the problems of independence, drug use and crime that their children are exhibiting (Phillips and Dustin, 2004). Girls are trafficked by their parents to their country of origin, often on the pretext of taking a holiday to meet relatives, and then abandoned with a man to whom they are forcefully married off (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 55). In some cases husbands or wives in arranged/forced marriages are imported into the UK.<sup>47</sup>

The UN Trafficking Rapporteur’s report argues that the practice of child marriage should be seen as a form of trafficking in women (UNHRC, 2007a). The 1964 marriage convention defines it as forced marriage, and it fits the definition of slavery in the slavery convention. The numbers of girls involved in child marriages are considerable (Bunting, 2000). The number of girls married off at very young ages varies between countries: in Cameroon, for instance, 62% of girls are married off before the legal minimum age of 18 (Mathur et al, 2003); in West Africa, South Asia, East and Central Africa, 30% or more of girls aged 15-19 are already married; in Niger, the percentage of girls married off before 18 is 82%; in Bangladesh it is 75%; in Nepal, it is 63%; in India 57%, and in Uganda 50% (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 57).

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<sup>47</sup> In 2000, over 10,000 Pakistani nationals obtained entry clearance to join spouses in the UK (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 55).

Worldwide there are 51 million girls between 15 and 19 who are married. The number of girls who are expected to marry before 18 in the decade after 2003 is 100 million (ibid.).

Parents are selling girls for short-time sexual use by rich foreign Muslim men (IRIN, 2005, 2006). This form of “marriage,” called “temporary marriage” in which elements of prostitution are clearly represented, is taking place in some Muslim communities in Yemen and Egypt. In other countries the women involved are likely adults taking part in the practice out of dire economic need, or they might be divorcees who have no other way of supporting their children (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 59). It is being defended by some scholars as having been engaged by Mohamed himself and as necessary particularly for men who travel for business or study and in need of a temporary sexual outlet (Haeri, 1992). And solemnized by clerics, it is being promoted as protection from prostitution, and even good for women because it offers poor women and widows a way of gaining subsistence. It can last anywhere from a couple of minutes to a life-time. This practice is clearly about men’s right. A man can have as many temporary wives as he can, and up to four permanent ones, and can break the contract at any time, whereas the women cannot; and women who are married ‘temporarily’ are seen as no longer virgins and have little chance of permanent marriage (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 59). The calling of this form of “prostitution” “marriage” in order to claim that it is not prostitution is a good illustration of Orwellian double-speak: war is peace, peace is war; marriage is not prostitution...It might seem somewhat strange to characterise marriage as a form of prostitution, but there is a long and strong tradition in feminist thought from Mary Wollstonecraft in 1790, Christabel Pankhurst, Cicely Hamilton, and Simone De Beauvoir through to Andrea Dworkin, Carol Pateman and Sheila Jeffreys that have drawn similarities between marriage and prostitution and made them central to social analysis and critique (Hamilton, 1909; Dworkin, 1983; Pateman, 1988; Jeffreys, 1985a, 2009). These forms of servile marriage and marriage trafficking just makes the traditional basis of marriage in men gaining access to women’s bodies and labour through women’s economic subordination more obvious.

Accounting research has traditionally not had much concern for researching marriage practices because of the way it tends to uncritically adopt the liberal premise separating the “public” from the “private” spheres of life. This “public/private” distinction is a central premise of liberal political theory and its variants such as the theory of neoclassical economics or microeconomics and moral utilitarianism that informs “mainstream” accounting research (Chua, 1986; Tinker and Gray, 2003). If labour is unpaid, such as the ‘domestic’ labour that women mostly do as wives, partners, mothers, sisters and flatmates in the home, it is generally not recognized in economic and business research (Waring, 1988, 1997). Radical feminist critiques of marriage and prostitution show, however, that this is not justifiable because it is precisely in this “private sphere” of home and hearth that male dominance is enforced and its unequal relations reproduced. We need more feminist research into familial or kin accountings that early feminist accounting have begun the important project of constructing (Gray, 2002), and this needs to be extended into researching the servile forms of marriage that constitute an important part of the global sexual-exploitation today. Moreover, when it comes to a marriage practice as commercialized as the mail order bride industry, it is clear that accounting is playing a key role in its development. As the calculative financial practice recording organizational transactions, accounting has been and will be mediating the terms of exchange between the women being trafficked and the agencies trafficking them, and facilitating the process of trafficking

throughout its business cycle. We need research that can show accounting's distributive role in mediating unequal social relations between the women and the agencies who traffic them, between women and the husbands they end up being married to, and in masking the unequal relations and the harms that such inequalities reproduce.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PORNOGRAPHY**

Sheila Jeffreys calls the pornography industry "the launching pad of the contemporary normalization of the sex industry in the west" (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 62). With good reason; it is here that considerable growth throughout the sector began (Jeffreys, 2009); and it is through pornography that prostitution has been mainstreamed into the day-to-day business of major corporations (Dines, 2010), and into the entertainment, music, sport, and fashion industries (Jeffreys, 2005). The industry is now seriously covered in the business pages of newspapers. Pornography companies such as Beate Uhse from Germany, are listed on the Stock Exchange. The exact profits being made from the industry are hard to gauge, in part because of the diversity of the form of sexual exploitation involved, and in part because some companies are not keen for their involvement in pornography to be known. We do know, however, that the profits from the industry are huge, that they do not flow to the women and children who are most harmed by it, but to the men who dominate it.

In 2007, Top Ten Reviews, a website which reviews technology for the web, collated information from a number of sources on the size and worth of the pornography industry. It estimates that the industry is worth US\$97.06 billion worldwide, which is more than the combined revenue of the top 10 web technology companies such as Microsoft, Google and Amazon combined (Top Ten Reviews, 2007). Pornography revenue for the US was estimated at \$13.33 billion, which is higher than the revenue of the media corporations ABC, NBC, and CBS combined. Each year, 13,000 films are released, with revenues from pornography rivalling all the major Hollywood studios combined (Dines, 2010, p. 47). While DVDs drove the rapid growth of the pornography market in the two decades from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, it has been the Internet, especially broadband access, that has powered continued market expansion in recent years (ibid.). Sales and rentals of X-rated DVDs were down in 2006 (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 67), but this has been more than made up for by growth in Internet sales. In 2007, there were 4.2 million websites making up 12% of all websites, and constituting 420 million web pages of pornography (ibid.). Internet sales of porn are estimated at \$4.9 billion. The largest amount of pornography webpages came from the US with 244,661,900, followed by Germany with 10,030,200, the UK, with 8,506,800, Australia, with 5,655,800, Japan, with, 2,700,800, the Netherlands, with 1,883,800, Russia, with 1,080,600, Poland, with 1,049,600, and Spain, with 852,800 (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 66). In Denmark, the country in which Richard Poulin points out was the cradle of the "sexual revolution" that decensored pornography and ushered in the commercialization of women's sexual subordination, pornography is estimated to be the third largest industry in financial terms (Poulin, 2005, p. 108; Jeffreys, 2009). European users spent \$364 million in 2001, with 70% of that being on pornography (ibid.). The number of hardcore pornography titles produced each year increased from 1,300 in 1988 to 12,000 in 2004 and 13,588 in 2005 (Top Ten Reviews, 2007). The part of the industry that is in San Fernando Valley, a hub of pornography production, is estimated to be worth US\$1 billion in 2006 (Barrett, 2007). In 15 years the Valley's 'adult entertainment'

industry has quadrupled in size, with annual revenues equally the restaurant, fast food, and bar business in the area combined (ibid.). A major factor driving the growth is low overhead costs: the studios are small and cheap to make, most costing \$20,000. The average production worker makes \$61,000 a year. Vivid, the Valley's biggest company, and one of the biggest pornography companies worldwide, made \$150 million in 2005. The California industry employs 20,000 people, and pays \$31 million in taxes just on the sale of videos alone (Poulin, 2005). Most of the money in the pornography industry is made by pornography distributors, such as pay-per-view and subscription porn businesses, cable and satellite companies, and adult channels and hotels which are worth US \$1.7 billion (ibid.). In the American hotel system, 40% of rooms have pay-per-view, which accounts for 50% of videos watched. Phone sex is a lucrative aspect of the pornography industry. Frederick Lane suggests that in 2000 phone sex alone generated between \$750 million and \$1 billion in revenues in the US. As much as 50% of this was retained by US long-distance carriers (Lane, 2001, p. 151). Impoverished Third World nations get income from having lax phone regulations and higher per-minute rates that US customers are charged for placing calls to those countries (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 69). This is big business. As Andrew Edmond, CEO of Flying Crocodile, a \$20 million pornography Internet business, stated (Dines, 2010, p. 47): "a lot of people [outside entertainment], get distracted from the business model [by the sex]. It is just as sophisticated and multilayered as any other market place. So are the harms that it produces.

Frederick Lane, in his book *Obscene Profits*,<sup>48</sup> is surprisingly frank in his positive account of the industry about the fact that it is controlled by men and that the profits go to men: "While the number of sites actually run by women is certainly higher than two, it is probably not significantly higher...The images of women and the profits they generate are still largely controlled by men...the demand is being satisfied by the sale of large collections of photographs of women who were paid a nominal amount (if at all)" (Lane, 2001, p. 211). There is also harm to male consumers in the form of financial pain. In a 2008 study, Insolvency Line in the UK found that a quarter of people, overwhelmingly male, with problem debt confessed to spending money on viewing pornography, phone sex and visiting brothels or strip clubs (Chivers, 2008). The report concludes that the sex industry, behind drug and alcohol abuse, is third in the table of the most common reasons for getting into debt. And, as background to them all, the harms of pornography itself as a form of prostitution or male violence against women (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2009).

In such a dynamic business sector, accounting will be playing various roles in the financial processes of the organizations and institutions in the field. Accounting, in its distributive role will be mediating the (unequal) financial exchanges between women and the production companies hiring to be prostituted; adjudicating how the women are to be paid in comparison to the male actors; controlling the overhead costs of production companies; advising on cost-saving strategies that might skimping on superannuation benefits, healthcare insurance, medical examination benefits and other conditions that workers are normally entitled to; facilitating the unequal distribution of profits from the women who produce it to the production companies that produce the pornography products to the various companies that function as their distributional outlets (i.e. internet pornography subscription companies, media companies, hotel chains, etc.). In cases where production companies are producing pornography in

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<sup>48</sup> He estimates that the worth of the industry at the time of writing was US\$10 billion or possibly as much as \$15-20 billion (Lane, 2001, p. xiv).

impoverished Third World or peripheral countries and repatriating the profits to the richer countries of the centre, or exporting pornography to the local communities of these poorer countries, it represents a process of cultural imperialism and forms of colonization that lends an important dimension to the role that accounting will be playing in facilitating this process. Gail Dines points out that pornography companies aren't just benefiting from technological developments such as the Internet and telecommunications; in many ways, pornography companies are leading the way in their development. It was pornography companies that pioneered the development of mobile phone technology so that pornography could be transmitted to male consumers more easily (Dines, 2010). Here too, accounting will be instrumental in facilitating these technological developments and integrating them into business processes. One of the important aspects of pornography's development is its infiltration into mainstream culture such as the entertainment, sports, music and fashion industries (Jeffreys, 2005; Dines, 2010). Alongside facilitating the material integration of the material processes involved, accounting will also be helping to reinforce the normalization of pornography that this mainstreaming will be doing through its ideological function of rendering invisible the harms and inequalities that pornography production and consumption is structured by presenting the financial transactions in its processes as those carried out by free and equal individuals freely entering contracts and consenting to carry out activities in a decontextualized world free of structural inequalities or oppression.

## **THE STRIP CLUB SECTOR**

One of the consequences of the industrialization and globalization of pornography and prostitution has been the rapid expansion of the strip club industry in western worlds in the last decade, particularly in the form of lap dancing clubs. This industry is estimated to be worth US \$75 billion worldwide (Montgomery, 2005).

The tradition of women dancing to sexually excite men (usually followed by commercial sexual use of women) is a historical practice that is present cultures, as is the case of the auletrides of classical Greece who were slaves (Murray and Wilson, 2004), and the dancing girls of Lahore, who are prostituted within their families from adolescence (Saeed, 2001, cited in Jeffreys, 2009, p. 86). Striptease itself isn't a new phenomenon in the west. But its scale and industrialization is new, with customers for its recent expansion being likely to have been trained and encouraged in the commercial sexual use of women by the decensorship of pornography and its expansion and normalization (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 87).

Sheila Jeffreys explains that in the 1980s striptease moved into a new phase, beginning in the US. Prior to this time, it was traditional for clubs to pay women to dance. From then onwards, however, clubs began charging women for 'stage fees,' reflecting an important shift in economic power relations between women dancers and club owners, as well as being a way of clubs to shift costs onto the women in order to increase their own profits to considerable levels. From this point on, the amount of the 'stage fee' rose very fast to the point where women sometimes danced with no profit for themselves in an evening, and even making a loss (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 87). This new level of profitability and the new principle that workers should pay to work, stimulated the strip club boom (ibid.). The US industry was estimated in 2006 to be worth more than baseball (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 87): "\$4 billion a year is spent by men on baseball, the national pastime. Compare that to \$15 billion a year spent by men at strip clubs" (Sawyer and Weir, 2006)." Strip clubs are expanding because of profit

levels in the strip club industry. In the US in 2005, there were an estimated 3,000 clubs employing 300,000 women (Stossel, 2005); in 2002, there were 200 lap dancing clubs in the UK (Jones et al, 2003), with an estimated turnover of £300 million (ibid.). They are “one of the fastest growing elements in the UK’s leisure services industry” (p. 90).

Stripping is being legitimized on the academic front by some writers in gender studies who see it as socially transgressive (Hanna, 1998; Schweitzer, 1999; Liepe-Levinson, 2002), by leading figures who legitimize it by visiting lap dancing clubs (i.e. Margaret Thatcher, Prince Harry, and Tony Blair’s son Euan in 2005/2006), and by its growth and integration into economic life. But, like other forms of sexual exploitation, it contains elements of prostitution, is underpinned by gender inequality, and produces certain forms of harm and abuse. Strippers, Sheila Jeffreys explains, do not work independently; they work in clubs that are extremely exploitative. The clubs, as investigative reporters in the UK and US have revealed, are often part of national and international chains that have criminal connections (Blackhurst and Gatton, 2002). Although the attempts of strip club owners to promote themselves and their venues as respectable, the trafficking of women by organized crime has become a common source of supply of dancers (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 93). As Sheila Jeffreys outlines (ibid.): “All over Europe and North America women and girls are brought into clubs by deception, by force or, initially, by consent. In all cases, they are kept in debt bondage, have their travel documents confiscated and controlled by threats to themselves or their families, all the traditional aspects of modern slavery.” The feminist anti-violence organization Ruhama argues that the clubs ‘groom’ women for prostitution and “in every other country in the world they are just a cover for prostitution” (ibid.). The profit levels in this industry wouldn’t be so great if the women dancing were being fairly remunerated, but they are not. Profit levels in the industry are enhanced by the fact that strippers do not get benefits that other club workers receive, such as sick leave and superannuation since clubs owners treat them as individuals who rent space in the club to dance (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 95). There has been little research on the physical and psychological harms that strippers face in clubs (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 97), and harms are often made invisible by research on stripping informed by postmodern, poststructural and liberal feminist (i.e. “sex radical”) approaches that are individualistic and decontextualized of male supremacy and its practices of sexual exploitation and abuse (see, for example, Egan, 2006), but from research that has been done we know that women had to engage in activity they did not want because their income was “entirely dependent on compliance with customer demands in order to earn tips” (Holsopple, 1998, p. 3), that they suffer abuse from male buyers in the form of “customers spit[ting] on women, spray[ing] beer, and flick[ing] cigarettes at them,” being “pelted with ice, coins, trash, condoms, room keys, pornography, and condoms” (ibid., p. 8), and commonly “bitten, licked, slapped, punched, and pinched” (ibid.). Alongside this, the women suffer particular harms from the conditions in which they are required to dance: elevated runways so narrow that they cannot get away from men on either side; private dancers where men openly masturbated and “stick their fingers inside women”; wall dancing which require women to “carry alcohol swabs to wash the customer’s fingers before he inserts them into her vagina”; and other forms of sexual harassment and pressure (ibid.). Holsopple says that regulations about customers not being allowed to touch dancers are “consistently violated” and “stripping usually involves prostitution” (ibid.). The harms to women are, moreover, not just to the dancers. They also extend to women in business. Strip clubs are male-dominated arenas that more and more men are using to establish business contacts,

take clients out to, and have meetings, and because women are typically not invited or find strip clubs off-putting or degrading to women, they are systematically being shut out of these business interactions, thus reinforcing the gender inequality of the glass ceiling for women in business (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 99). The strip club industry is a masculinising institution that is growing off the abuse and subordination of women.

The role accounting will be playing in the strip club industry's business processes will be similar to how it functions in the pornography industry given their interrelationships and similarities. The above discussion of the strip club industry, however, which points to the interconnections between it and organized and trafficking brings out other considerations not thus far covered (which is not to say that the other sectors discussed thus far aren't linked to organized crime and trafficking. They are.). Just as accounting plays an important role in the organizational life of legitimate businesses, it will also be involved in structuring the activities of organized crime organizations and the trafficking supply chain. Given the covert nature of these institutional practices, however, this poses difficulties for scholars wanting to research accounting's role in this area, although it is crying out to be researched. We need this area to be researched.

## **MILITARY PROSTITUTION**

Military prostitution has been one of the most important vectors in the global sex industry's industrialization and global spread in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 107). As Sheila Jeffreys outlines (*ibid.*):

The massive industrialized armies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century understood that prostitution was necessary to their military preparedness. The male soldiers were provided with easy, organized, cheap and 'safe' access to prostituted women. The prostituted women were recruited in a variety of ways. The 'comfort women' were kidnapped, deceived or bought from parents in Korea, China and other invaded and colonized countries for the Japanese military brothels of the 1930s and 1940s. The women and girls used by peacekeepers in brothels in Kosovo are trafficked women kept in debt bondage, mostly from Eastern Europe. The methods are strikingly similar but the degree of official involvement by militaries and state governments varies. Military prostitution on a scale similar to that employed by the Japanese was part of the US military rest and recreation régimes after World War II throughout South East Asia. This formed the basis for the huge sex industries and trafficking of women that developed in Korea, Thailand and the Philippines, and became such important sectors of their economies. In its sheer scale, military prostitution can be seen as kickstarting a crucial aspect of the globalization of prostitution, the sexual exploitation of the a sexual proletariat of women and children from poor countries by members of rich westernized nations.

Feminists in the early part of the second wave feminism raised the issue of sexual exploitation by militaries. Susan Brownmiller showed how militaries used rape to vanquish male populations (see also, Dworkin, 1997, 2000). Cynthia Enloe in the 1980s made military prostitution an issue for international feminist theory through her work on militarization (Enloe, 1983, 1989, 2000). Enloe explained that the problem she analyzed was not just much militaries as militarization; the gearing up of societies for conflict in ways that profoundly affects their economies and everyday politics. Her

analysis shows how the creation and maintenance of huge, war-ready militaries requires the involvement of hundreds of thousands of people to bolster and service them, and specifically women, who are inducted into prostitution. In this feminist understanding, the masculinity of troops is deliberately created by pornography and prostitution which enable men to 'other' women (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 108).

The industrialization of military prostitution can be traced back to the 'comfort women' system of Japan in the 1930s and the 'rape camps' of Nazi Germany (Tanaka, 2002; MacKinnon, 2006). The US military in South East Asia partook of the 'comfort women' system too and was a major force in constructing military prostitution after the Second World War (Jeffreys, 2009, pp. 113-114). The Bosnian 'rape camps' set up by Serb militias during the Bosnian War (1992-1995) are strikingly similar in terms of their organization and violent practices to those 'rape camps' of Nazi Germany. Both were forms of mass rape and genocidal sexual slavery (MacKinnon, 2006; Jeffreys, 2009). Since the early 1990s, another source for the military development of prostitution industries emerged in the form of "peacekeeper prostitution": prostitution organized for the men engaged in peacekeeping and reconstructionist activities (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 120). The NGO Refugees International documents the sexual exploitation of local women and girls by peacekeepers in Sierra Leone in 2002; in Eritrea in 2000; the expulsion of Italian, Danish and Slovak peacekeepers for sex with minors; and an Irish soldier making pornographic films with Eritrean women, amongst other instances of sexual exploitation and abuse. In the early 2000s, Thai women were being trafficked into brothels in East Timor, where peacekeeping and reconstruction forces created a thriving industry (Farr, 2004).

Feminist research on military prostitution shows that there are there important similarities between the R&R prostitution carried out by the US military in Korea and the "sexual slavery" of comfort women system and the Bosnian rape camps. Moreover, it also shows that military prostitution cannot be effectively separated from prostitution of the ordinary civilian kind (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 126). Catherine MacKinnon, for instance, shows that what the rape camps in Bosnia have in common with prostitution more generally. Writing about the Bosnian rape camps she says: "It is at once mass rape and serial rape indistinguishable from prostitution more generally. It is concentration camp as brothel: women impounded to be passed around by men among men" (MacKinnon, 2006, p. 145); "[w]artime is exceptional in that atrocities by soldiers against civilians are always essentially state acts" but "men do in war what they do in peace" (ibid., p. 127). The harms in military prostitution are common to domestic prostitution because military systems are frequently built on traditional forms of prostitution. They are not distinct. And this connection is clear by the way they have formed the basis for the massive prostitution tourism industry that we have today.

Critical accounting researchers have shown that accounting has been centrally involved in the mobilization and practice of war (Chwastiak, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2008; Funnell, 1998; Chwastiak and Lehman, 2008). They have shown how accounting masks the violent practices and inequalities structuring the processes of war, to rationalize and normalize violence, and to contribute to the acceleration and expansion of war. Accounting will also have been involved in the development of military prostitution and its current practices. Researching this area gives an added dimension to the accounting and war literature because the basis of militarization and male supremacy in the subordination and sexual exploitation of women are quite clear. What role did accounting play in the formulation of state policies justifying the organization and development of military prostitution? Did accounting firms have

anything to do with formulating or advising on these policies? What role did accounting have in structuring the unequal financial exchanges between the women and the State, the women and brothel providers, and others involved in the military prostitution industry? How did accounting mask the harms and unequal relations involved in this industry so that its activities on paper look ‘rational,’ ‘reasonable’ and innocuous?

## **PROSTITUTION TOURISM**

The development of the sex tourism in Asia from the 1970s onwards was substantially organized through the groundwork put in place by US military prostitution (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 129). It began in those sites where prostitution developed to service US militaries in “rest and recreation” such as Thailand, the Philippines and Korea, and it has developed to a point where it is providing a substantial proportion of GDP in those countries. In fact, governments of poor countries have deliberately developed sex tourism as a means of gaining foreign exchange (Truong, 1990). Military prostitution, however, is not the only factor in driving the development of sex tourism since sex industries grew strongly in other areas as well, such as Amsterdam, Havana, Estonia, and Jamaica so it needs to be explained in terms of other global forces (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 129).

The field of leisure studies has grown in response to the developing importance of ‘consumption’ in the global economy, and sex tourism is currently being taught as a legitimate aspect of ‘leisure’ in leisure and tourism studies (Opperman, 1998; Ryan and Hall, 2001). Sex tourism also has its apologists in academics who write from a sex work perspective, stressing the agency of prostituted women and arguing that sex tourism is not gendered since women do it too (Kempadoo, 1998). By contrast, feminist leisure studies researchers are showing how leisure and tourism itself are profoundly gendered, with women facilitating men’s leisure through both their unpaid work as housewives and the objects through which men achieve leisure by being prostituted or acting as hostesses and strippers (Deem, 1999; Jeffreys, 2006, 2009).

Sex tourism is being increasingly recognized as important to national and regional economies. Tourism itself has grown in importance in the world economy to the point where in 1996 it made up 10% of all consumer spending. Some poor countries, finding themselves at a disadvantage in the new world economic order have turned to tourism and expressly sex tourism as a way to gain dollar income (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001, p. 551): “As newly industrialising countries struggle to find commodity niches in the globalized economy, they frequently find many of the best product niches taken. As a consequence, in some countries, sex tourism becomes a significant market fostering both national economic development and international capital accumulation.” Prostitution tourism hasn’t just developed in those sites that harboured military prostitution in Asia; it has also developed where men as individuals or in groups travel for fun, for business, for sports events or political assemblies (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 131). Prostitution tourism destinations aren’t just in the poor world; they’re also in the rich world, such as Amsterdam and the US in Nevada (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001; Shared Hope International, 2007).

The sex tourism industry is an important site for normalizing prostitution as “leisure” and one where the inequalities of global capitalist patriarchy coalesce. As Sheila Jeffreys argues and illustrates in *The Industrial Vagina*, it “outsources women’s subordination, allowing tourists and businessmen from rich countries to access the greater desperation and degradation that can be bought in the poor countries, or from

trafficked women in cities like Amsterdam” (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 130). It “enables men in countries in which women are making advances towards equality, one aspect of which is the ability to deny men absolute sexual access, to buy women’s sexual subordination elsewhere through their greater spending power,” and it “offers white men the advantage of being able to purchase sexual fantasies of otherness and the notion that there are women elsewhere who are desperate for their touch” (ibid.).

There are several ways in which accounting is integrated and playing a role in prostitution tourism industries. First of all, at the level of state policies, it can be playing a role in giving ‘weight’ (Graham and Neu, 2003, p. 458) to the sort of information that normalizes prostitution tourism as legitimate by presenting it as an important market sector of national and economies by focussing only on its size, profitability, contribution to GDP, and economic growth, while rendering invisible its harms and inequalities. As discussed above, countries are often forced to resort to developing prostitution tourism as a result of their subordinate positioning in the global, and neoliberal policies and neoliberal capitalist globalization more generally in constructing and exacerbating these inequalities between central and peripheral economies and between countries of the global North and the global South. Critical accounting research has shown how accounting has played a role in its function as a technology of surveillance (Miller and Rose, 1990; Rose, 1991) that operationalizes neoliberal policies by returning information to the centres of calculation (Neu et al, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007). Could accounting be playing a similar in imposing and enforcing the neoliberal policies driving the growth of sex tourism around the world? Graham and Neu (2003) explain that accounting is implicated in structuring relationships both within and between countries because of the effects of international trade on jobs (p. 465). How is accounting’s measuring of capital, product and currency flows at the macro level affecting the creation and destruction of jobs such that prostitution industries are affected? How is it affecting employment levels, and how is this playing out in prostitution industries? Moreover, how is accounting helping to structure its gendering (those who are prostituted, johns, brothel owners, etc.)? How are accounting firms who offer financial and auditing services reporting on prostitution tourism organizations and institutions? And how is accounting being used to mask its harms and inequalities? Is accounting information being used to give ‘weight’ (Graham and Neu, 2003) to information legitimating the forms of prostitution within it as “just sex” or just “sex work”? Is, or if not, could accounting information being used in NGO, feminist and other initiatives aimed at reforming or rolling back this global sex industry sector? If it isn’t, what could that look like?

## **SEX TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN: THE SUPPLY OF MEN’S DEMAND**

All these sectors of the global sexual-exploitation industry require the supply of women, and given the oppressive nature of prostitution that is its basis, women have to be forced into it; the ‘supply’ of women has to be forced and the women have to kept there in conditions of sexual enslavement. Trafficking for prostitution is this forced supply. Trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation accounts for 87% of all reported victims worldwide (UNODC, 2006, p. 33). Women and girls are trafficked into all forms of the sex industry such as brothel, street and escort prostitution, strip clubs, pornography, military prostitution and prostitution tourism (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 152). The method that is becoming the main one for trafficking women and girls for national and international sex industries is debt bondage

(Correspondents in Vienna, 2008). It is worth \$31 billion yearly according to UN estimates (*ibid.*).

This is an image problem for the global sex industry as the scale and brutality of the supply system has become better known through the work of women's NGOs such as Coalition Against Trafficking in Women and media exposure. It has become more difficult to promote prostitution as simply a job like any other. Trafficking has a long history as a supply for prostitution (Frances, 2007; Tanaka, 2002), and during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries feminists made it one of their central concerns (Jeffreys, 1997). It was this feminist work that led to the United Nations 1949 Convention Against Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. The history of the practice shows how about the practice, such as its methods of recruitment and control, have remained unchanged today, and its growth and scale today point to it being an essential aspect of the industry.

The women who were vulnerable to trafficking in this earlier phase, such as Jewish women escaping pogroms, and trafficked in rolls of carpet through London to Buenos Aires, and Russian women escaping the famine of 1921 trafficked in and through China, shared characteristics with those women who are vulnerable to trafficking today. They suffer from economic devastation in their countries, whether from civil war, national disasters, or financial crises, which causes them to flee. Earlier waves of trafficking arose from changes in transport such as the development of the steamship which made travel easier and from the flows of globalization and human migration that were happening at the time (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 154). This wave was interrupted by the international attention that led to the 1949 Convention. But it has returned with a vengeance as the international sex industry has industrialized and globalized. It is taking place in a much changed ideological, economic and political environment (*ibid.*). Technological changes such as airplanes and the Internet are making trafficking easier; neoliberal economic policies imposed by the World Bank and the World Trade Organization are creating problems for subsistence for people internationally; the destruction of communism in Eastern Europe, and now China and Vietnam has immediately led to the growth of huge sex industries in those countries, and exposed women to traffickers on a large scale; and the normalization of pornography, strip clubs and other prostitution sectors have created an interest in male consumers to turn a blind eye to the problem of trafficking and to the problem of prostitution more generally.

It isn't possible to make firm estimates about the numbers of women, girls and even a few young men who are trafficked into prostitution annually because of the covert nature of the economy, amongst other considerations (Kelly, 2005; Savona and Stefanizzi, 2007). Nevertheless, estimates have been made. The US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons estimated that the number of people trafficked across international borders between 2003 and 2004 ranged between 700,000 and 900,000 per year (Albanese, 2007). At the same time, the number trafficked into the US was estimated to have decreased from 45,000-50,000 per year to 14,400-17,500. However, on the question of estimations Savona and Steffanizzi comment that "[a]lthough it may be difficult to examine the value of the trade in human beings...all experts confirm that the volume of the traffic has never been so great, nor has it ever increased at such a dizzying rate" (Savona and Stefanizzi, 2007, p. 2). The government of the UK estimates, for instance, that 75% of the prostituted women to be from the Baltic States, Africa and South East Asia (Townsend, 2005).

The 2000 Protocol on Trafficking in Persons of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime has a definition which is designed to capture the variety of methods used to gain control of women, covering those which use force and those which do not, and deliberately making consent irrelevant. The definition is (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 159):

‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation.

The wording of this definition was subject to fierce lobbying struggles. Representatives of the sex work lobby and those NGOs who take similar positions argued strongly in favour of separating ‘forced’ trafficking from legitimate ‘free’ prostitution, and even trying to ensure that prostitution was not mentioned in the definition. They were not successful though as a result of groups such as Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) who ensured that prostitution and sexual exploitation were mentioned and included in the definition.

The harms of trafficking into prostitution are extreme. They are subjected to debt bondage; routinely raped by traffickers en route to their final destination either by the one pimp who has bought her or by a group; at the destination women have reported being “hit, kicked, punched, struck with objects, cut with knives and raped” (Zimmerman, 2003). Murder is “not uncommon” and serves to terrify other women being trafficked (ibid.).

Accounting has a role in controlling “flows of people” (Graham and Neu, 2003, p. 464) and trafficking is certain a process in which the flow of people is the central practice. There will be many important ways in which accounting will be facilitating this flow. At the state level, in policies that produce revenue and establish criteria (i.e. ‘entertainment’ visas) for immigration flows; in companies fronting for trafficking by presenting trafficked women as simply a worker (an expense) on their books. Given the covert nature of this process, however, researching it, much less accounting’s role, presents some unique difficulties to scholars.

## **THE STATE AS PIMP**

The industrialization and expansion of the global sexual-exploitation industry cannot have developed, and cannot be sustained, without the active participation of the state. While trafficking in women and girls were becoming an increasing concern among international bodies and NGOs, some states from the 1990s onwards were busy legalization and decriminalizing their prostitution industries. Australia too this path in the 1990s; the Netherlands, Germany and New Zealand followed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. States facilitate the development of national and international sex industries in various ways. The Japanese state, for instance, acted as pimp for both its own military and for the occupying US forces after World War II (Tanaka, 2002); the Irish, Japanese, and Canadians governments have, until recently, had special visa categories for ‘entertainers’ which enabled trafficking in women for strip clubs and prostitution (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 173; Macklin, 2003); and states in South East Asia, such as the Philippines have special training programmes for ‘entertainers,’ although none of

these states have officially legalized prostitution. States that have legalized and decriminalized prostitution are actively creating the conditions for the rapid expansion and development of prostitution industries.

States that legalize prostitution overlook its obviously gendered nature, the fact that it is overwhelmingly women who are prostituted for men. Legalizing states argue that they are acting in the interests of prostituted women since those who pass through the legal sector will not be so vulnerable to severe violence, but they overlook the fact that legalized systems affect the status of all women, not just those who are prostituted, in negative ways (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 177). It is telling that there is no literature arguing that prostitution benefits women as a group. And, as Sheila Jeffreys has pointed out, there is a good deal of evidence that the opposite is the case (*ibid.*). The harms that prostituted women suffer in prostitution both in terms of physical violence and its psychological effects under legalized prostitution point to it being a form of male violence against women (Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2009). Other social and political harms include harms to good governance, such as the encouragement of organized crime, the undermining of local democracy, harm to the status of all women, and harm to neighbourhoods (Jeffreys, 2009, p. 188). States purport to serve “the public interest” but insofar as they facilitate and legalize prostitution, they are acting in the interests of power, and they are dealing in the degradation of women.

The state’s role as pimp in facilitating the development of the prostitution industry involves different processes that accounting could be playing a role within: state prostitution policy formulation, select committee submissions, parliamentary hearings, policy implementation, and monitoring and review activities; financial and economic analysis of the size, worth and growth of the sector that could be used to justify or challenge the legitimacy of the industry, amongst others.

The global sexual-exploitation industry is an area in dire need of being researched, and the previous section has sought to identify some of the key areas in which accounting practice is playing a role within it that need to be researched. I am not interested, however, in simply discussing new research opportunities. The women and children and the men who are being killed, harmed and exploited within it and by it do not need “new” research; what they need is for sexual exploitation to end. They need pornographers, prostitutes and pimps to get off them, for the global sexual-exploitation industry to be rolled back, for prostitution to be made illegal, and ultimately for it to be abolished. What they need, in other words, is not research that simply describes the global sex industry, leaving all its inequalities and oppressions in place through their mystification, naturalization and universalization; what they need is research that can actually help in changing the world by demystifying the global sex industry, by making its harms and inequalities visible, and that can be put in the service of social movements aimed at bringing prostitution to an end. What would accounting research look like if it were of this kind? To explore this question, we need to consider the theoretical underpinnings of accounting research and its political basis – its relationship to the wider world of material practice and what this (political) practice might look like.

# DISCUSSION: THE IMPLICATIONS OF RADICAL FEMINISM FOR RE-THINKING ACCOUNTING RESEARCH AND POLITICAL PRAXIS

“Think about how marriage controlled women, how women were property under the law; this did not begin to change until the early years of the twentieth century. Think about the control the church had over women. Think about the control the church had over women. Think about what a resistance has been going on, and all the trouble you have made for these men who took for granted that you belonged to them. And think about pornography as a new institution of social control, a democratic use of terrorism against all women, a way of saying publicly to every woman who walks down the street: avert your eyes (a sign of second-class citizenship), look down, bitch, because when you look up you’re going to see a picture of yourself being hung, you’re going to see your legs open.

Pornography tells us that the will of women is to be used.”  
(Dworkin, 1997, pp. 133-134)

“The cure to this problem is political. That means taking power away from men. This is real stuff; it is serious stuff. They have too much of it. They do not use it right. They are bullies. They do not have a right to what they have; and that means it has to be taken away from them. We have to take the power that they have to use us away from them. We have to take the power that they have to hurt us away from them. We have to take their money away from them. They have too much of it. Any man who has enough money to spend degrading a woman’s life in prostitution has too much money. He does not need what he’s got in his pocket. But there is a woman who does.

We need to take away their social dominance--over us. We live in a tyranny of liars and hypocrites and sadists. Now, it will cost you to fight them. They have to be taken off of women, do you understand me? They need to be lifted up and off. What is intractable about prostitution is male dominance. And it is male dominance that has to be ended so that women will not be prostituted.

*You*, you – you have to weaken and destroy every institution that is part of how men rule over women. And don’t ask if you should. The question is how, not if. How? Do one thing, rather than spend your lives debating if you should do this or if you should do that and do they really deserve it and is it really fair? Fair? Is it really fair? Darlings, we could get the machine guns out tonight. Fair? We break our own hearts with these questions. Is it fair? Don’t respect their laws. No. Don’t respect their laws. Women need to be making laws. I hope that Catharine MacKinnon and I have set an example. We have tried to. There is no reason for any woman, any woman in the world, to be basically performing fellatio on the current legal system. But mostly that is what one is in law school to learn how to do.”

(Dworkin, 1997, pp. 149-150)

“What I hope you will take away from here is this: that any vestige of sex hierarchy, any, will mean that some women somewhere are being prostituted. If you look around you and you see male supremacy, you know that somewhere where you cannot see, a woman is being prostituted, because every hierarchy needs a bottom and prostitution is the bottom of male dominance. So when you accommodate, when you compromise, when you turn a blind eye, you are collaborating. Yes, I know that your life is also at stake but yes you are collaborating, both things are true, in the destruction of another woman’s life.

I am asking you to make yourselves enemies of male dominance, because it has to be destroyed for the crime of prostitution to end--the crime against the woman, the human-rights crime of prostitution: and everything else is besides the point, a lie, an excuse, an apology, a justification, and all the abstract words are lies, justice, liberty, equality, they are lies. As long as women are being prostituted they are lies. You can tell the lie and in this institution you will be taught how to tell the lie; or you can use your lives to dismantle the system that creates and then protects this abuse. You, a well-trained person, can stand with the abuser or with the rebel, the resister, the revolutionary. You can stand with the sister he is doing it to; and if you are very brave you can try to stand between them so that he has to get through you to get to her. That, by the way, is the meaning of the often misused word *choice*. These are choices. I am asking you to make a choice.”

(Dworkin, 1997, pp. 150-151)

The reality of the global sexual-exploitation industry forces us to consider whether our research bolsters or undermines it. More widely, the reality of male supremacy should force us to think about whether our research serves as a prop for it or as a tool for taking it apart. To paraphrase Paulo Freire, is our research “for domestication” or “for liberation” (Freire, 1972)? Does it raise social consciousness about the structural inequalities and social conflicts involved in the social practices that are examined or does it obfuscate and thereby legitimate these processes? And if it is more for domesticating than liberating, if it is immanently legitimating rather than emancipating, what would a more emancipatory approach to accounting research look like? In this section, I draw on radical feminist insights to discuss and explore these issues. Re-thinking accounting theory involves, first of all, practicing self-reflexivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Everett, 2004, 2007). In this case, self-reflexivity has to include trying to offer some explanations for the “silence” in accounting research over the global sexual-exploitation industry, and over prostitution and pornography in particular at a time when they are booming and producing harms on an ever-

expanding scale.<sup>49</sup> After this, I explore the issue of what sort of theories we should be using to research the global sex trade and prostitution and pornography, and I finish by considering the political implications that radical feminism poses as a political movement aimed at abolishing male supremacy for re-thinking the political basis of accounting research.

### **THE SILENCE OF MALE DOMINANCE IN ACCOUNTING RESEARCH: REFLEXIVITY**

Accounting researchers aren't separate from society; we're part of society. We inhabit certain locations within the social structure that socializes us in certain ways, predisposes us to experiencing social life in certain, and therefore to understanding it in certain ways. One of the consequences of our embeddedness in the social structural through particular positionings leads to our blind acceptance of "unthought categories of thought," those categories which "delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 40). In this light, we can understand the "silence" surrounding prostitution and pornography within accounting research as being a product of the accounting research field being bound by categories of thought that make them unthinkable. Moreover, we can understand this silence as being the result of academic researchers' social locations. There is something about our social positioning that predisposes us to not thinking about prostitution and pornography as interesting, relevant areas of accounting research. We could say the same thing about the relative absence and marginalization of radical feminist perspectives in accounting research. There is something about our social positioning that pushes us toward not seeing radical feminism as a theoretical perspective that should be central to our work and in fact toward not seeing it *at all*.

While I am sure there are at least a few possible social positions that would predispose us to thinking in this way, I think one of the most important type of positioning has to be gender. More specifically – and here I am addressing male accounting scholars – I think a big reason for this "silence" over prostitution and pornography in the literature and the marginalization of feminism in accounting research has a lot to do with our social positioning as men – that is, as part of the dominant sex class under male supremacy. Pornography and prostitution are male-supremacist institutions that enable us to exercise the male sex right that we are socialized from childhood onwards into feeling entitled to. A lot of men use pornography to masturbate to. A lot of men use prostitution. A lot of men get sexually titillated by looking at pornography, and at women's bodies that the clothes and "beauty practices" that the pornography-influenced fashion industry enables us visual access to. I used to consume pornography. And I know from direct experience how hard it is to look at it critically when you can get so easily turned on by it. When you get this type of benefit from pornography why would you want to critique it? When you get this sort of benefit and it appears so obviously 'good' would you even

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<sup>49</sup> Keith Hoskin once commented that critiques of past academic "silences" (he calls such critiques "arraignment for past silence") of only "rhetorical" or "curiosity" value and simply "unimportant preliminaries" for the real work of "canon deconstruction," "canon reconstruction" and "the possibility of a new *écriture féminine* entering the discourse of accounting" (Hoskin, 1992, p. 113). I would argue that this is wrong because it overlooks the importance of self-reflexive critiques of past silences in our accounting literature as part of deconstructing it (canon deconstruction) and trying to reconstruct it (canon reconstruction) in a way whereby feminism (the *écriture féminine*) can be made more central to the literature.

think of critiquing it? I've used pornography and I'm sure, amongst accounting scholars, I am not the only one. And if I'm right, this goes some way to explaining the silence over it and prostitution in accounting research.

Andrea Dworkin once made the point that, as a general rule, under patriarchal culture, if a social field or job is ever associated with "femininity" (with women) (e.g. nursing, early childhood teaching, secretarial work, etc.), men, as a general rule, will stay away from it in order to avoid being seen (and stigmatised) as 'feminine' – that is, as not a 'real' man (Dworkin, 1988; see also Hines, 1992, which makes a similar point with respect to accounting discourse being associated with "Yang" or masculine values and repressive of "Yin" or Feminine values). This implicit pattern of a sexual division of labour suggests that there is a perception on the part of most male critical accounting scholars that feminist accounting research is somehow 'women's work'; that is, work that only women do, and that the field, perhaps because it is perceived by male scholars as somehow 'feminized,' or associated with 'the feminine' is not the domain of 'real' men, not something that 'real' men do, and therefore also nothing to do with men... This lack of males doing feminist accounting research also suggests that male scholars might believe that the feminist project, the struggle against sexism, is nothing to do with men and that is something that only women need to do...<sup>50</sup> This sexual division reflects, and reinforces, the wider sexual division of labour on which male-supremacist culture is based (Dworkin, 1988). It also suggests that male critical accounting scholars have arguably internalized the patriarchal script that 'real' men and feminism do not mix; and even more problematically, it suggests that one of the subject positions that male critical accounting scholars have identified with (whether intentionally or unintentionally) is the gender position of masculinity itself, which only gains its meaning by distinguishing and distancing itself from femininity and anything closely associated with the feminine (Jensen, 2007).<sup>51</sup> <sup>52</sup> If I thought about my own reasons for staying away from feminism, I think this need to stay away from anything feminine is part of it but I also think there's more. It should've been quite easy for me to engage in feminism and to use it as a theoretical source for my thinking because my mum was a feminist. She was part of the independence struggle that fought for independence against the British and French that brought Vanuatu into being, she was a tireless advocate of women's rights, and she fought for women, for their freedom, for their recognition on every front she could till she died in my brother's arms on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January in 2002. I grew up with that, and I should've been able to incorporate feminism into my research because of that. I've found it really hard though because I've found that if you take it seriously, if you try to follow its insights all the way through, it actually forces to ask very uncomfortable questions about your own life – not just research, your wider life. It forces you to question your porn use and to in fact stop it. It forces you to consider how you typically interact with women. It makes you catch yourself objectifying a woman when looking at her, talking to her, when having sex with her. It makes you realize just how deeply

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<sup>50</sup> This lack of male scholars doing feminist accounting research makes no sense from an emancipatory (feminist) point of view since feminism – the struggle against sexism – isn't something that only concerns women; it is a universal political project that men have just as much of a stake in as women as it also goes to the heart of the emancipatory interests of men (hooks, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> And furthermore, by *raising itself above* femininity: masculinity is not only defined in opposition to femininity – it also places itself in a *hierarchical relation* to femininity. Masculinity above, femininity below; men above, women below.

<sup>52</sup> To understate, this sexual division of labour and male scholars' possible identification with masculinity and patriarchy is something of a barrier to developing a truly radical, progressive and emancipatory critical accounting literature.

ingrained sexist values are into your body, into your perception, and into your desires. It makes you realize just how male-supremacist our society actually and just how deeply ingrained in all aspects of everyday life sexism is. You see it everywhere and you can't help but see it everywhere. In our body language, in our dress, in the media, in the newspaper – everywhere. And when this starts to happen, you get a glimpse of just how *hard* feminism is to not just think about, but to live as a political practice. It's not fun; it's an incredibly serious political theory, an incredibly serious political movement. I think this is also what puts a lot of men off. I think we can sense how hard it is and we choose to stay away. And it's easy to turn away from a radical critique of an oppressive system when your dominant positioning within it insulates you from its worst effects and allows you to derive benefits from it. I keep on going back to feminism though because I've found that you can't relate to women as fully, as intimately, and as compassionately as you can as a man; a dominant social role that requires their subordination and that pits you in constant competition and struggle for dominance against other men. I keep going back to feminism because it offers a political path for helping men and women to relate to each and to themselves not as men and women, not as divided or half human beings, but to each other more fully, as whole, as human beings.

### **THEORY AS CHEERLEADING OR THEORY AS CRITIQUE: RE-THINKING ACCOUNTING THEORY**

The dominant theoretical paradigm in accounting research is liberalism, its economic theory being neoclassical economic theory, its ethical variant moral utilitarianism, and more recent public policy manifestation, neoliberalism (Chua, 1986; Tinker, 1985; Williams, 2004, 2006). This paradigm is not an adequate framework for critically researching prostitution and pornography, much less for critically researching anything else. This is because its pluralistic ontology presumes an inherently stable, conflict-free, and egalitarian world population by free and equal individuals, and decontextualizes this world of all structural dynamics and their historical specificities that are important in explaining social dynamics (Tinker, 2005; Tinker and Gray, 2003). Patricia Arnold has recently made this point in relation to the Global Financial Crisis (Arnold, 2009). She points out that mainstream accounting research is completely unable to explain accounting and crisis because, informed as it is by neoclassical economic theory, it fails to link the “micro” processes of accounting with the “macro political and economic environment in which it operates” that gives the social process the historically specific dynamics and tendencies that it has (Arnold, 2009, p. 805). This point has especial pertinence to our discussion of theories for investigating accounting's role in the global sexual-exploitation industry because it is the structural inequalities of the “macro political and economic environment” that forms the social context for the industry and that is producing and distributing its harms. Part of the “macro and political environment” that constitutes this social context are the structural contradictions of capital accumulation that have produced cyclical economic and financial crisis throughout capitalism's history and that produced the GFC itself (Harvey, 2010). The theoretical tradition in the accounting literature that has best explained these structural contradictions and the role of accounting within it, as Arnold (2009) argues, is the Marxist-informed political economy of accounting genre (Tinker, 1980, 1984, 1985; Armstrong, 1987; Tinker, Merino and Neimark, 1982; Neu, 2001). A Marxian political-economy of accounting approach is productive for making sense of the global sex trade because it allows us to

focus on aspects of the industry that the neoclassical economic approach would overlook. First of all, it doesn't treat accounting, in the neoclassical economic manner, as a politically neutral reporting practice concerned about objectively portraying and transparently representing the financial aspects of organizational activities and detached from the wider social and political struggles that animate capitalism's reproductive social process; rather, it situates accounting as a social practice that is centrally involved in the adjudication of allocation and distribution among different social groups and classes (Tinker, 1984, 1985), in the organizational disciplining and subordination of workers (Bryer, 2006), and in the construction of dominant class hegemony (Cooper, 1980); and secondly, it explicitly recognizes how accounting is both constructed by and constructive of the wider political-economic processes that it is embedded within (Tinker, 1980; Cooper, 1980; Neu, 2001; Everett, 2003). The strength of this approach is that it is able to keep the structural contradictions underpinning capitalism's process of capital accumulation, how they are playing out in the global sex industry, and how accounting is involved within them and in reproducing them in sight. Research adopting a political economy of accounting approach would be able to keep in sight and to critically analyze the unequal exchanges taking place within the industry within organizational labour processes as well as across constituencies in core and peripheral countries. This Marxist-informed approach to a political economy of accounting, has been important in analyzing the various ways in which accounting has played a role in addressing the inherent contradictions in capital's accumulation process (Harvey, 2006, 2010), the role that accounting might be playing in the production of crisis (Arnold, 2009), and in mediating the conflicts and struggles amongst social constituencies that these contradictions generate (Cooper, 1980; Cooper and Sherer, 1984; Lehman and Tinker, 1987; Neu and Taylor, 1996; Tinker, 1980, 1985; Tinker and Neimark, 1987). Moreover, its vantage point is sympathetic to those social constituencies who are subordinated by capitalism's capital accumulation process. This is one of the major traditions within the accounting literature that I would suggest, following Neu (2001), that could be used to research the global sex trade in progressive ways.

The other I'd suggest, again following Neu (2001), is research into the Governmentality aspects of accounting. Starting from the premise that government can be viewed as an "ensemble of institutions, calculations and tactics" that attempt to organize things for specific ends (Foucault, 1991), this research tradition has highlighted the role played by accounting in societal governance by examining how it functions as a "technology of government": that is, the "actual mechanisms through which authorities of various sorts have sought to shape, normalize, and instrumentalize the conduct, thoughts, decisions, and aspirations of others in order to achieve the objectives they consider desirable" (Miller and Rose, 1990, cited in Neu, 2001). I do not see these two approaches as mutually supportive rather than exclusive. In fact, it is problematic for Governmentality to be theorized in separation from Marxian political economy because, as Arnold (2009) points out, such theorizations have often ended up overlooking the inequalities in the material structures that Marxian political economy keeps in sight and their role in social and financial crises (see also, Neimark, 1990, 1994).

I would suggest, moreover, that these on their own aren't adequate. A problem with much Marxian theory, and this extends to socialist feminism, has been an ability or unwillingness to critically theorize how sexuality is socially constructed through male supremacy. This has led to many socialist feminists treating prostitution as 'socially necessary' labour and overlooking the physical and psychological harms that

it produces (Jeffreys, 2009). The critical analyzes that radical feminists like Sheila Jeffreys have made against the use by feminist theorists of post-structuralism – a body of masculine and bourgeois theory that in various ways have failed to theorize male supremacy and its role in the social construction of sexuality (see, for example, Jeffreys, 1997/2008, 2003, 2009). This points to the problems of using Foucauldian and postmodern theory without considering its theoretical blindspots. This illustrates why radical feminism is so important particularly when researching institutions like those prostitution and pornography that are based on sexual slavery. Radical feminism places the theorization of male supremacy and its social construction of sexuality as central to analysis. And it seeks the abolition of male supremacy. This means that it is not only an important theory for critically analyzing male supremacist practices, but also for how we ought to go about eradicating male supremacy itself.

### **THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL: RE-THINKING THE POLITICS OF MALE ACCOUNTING RESEARCHERS**

I want to finish this paper by talking about what male accounting scholars would need to integrate feminist thought and feminist politics into their research practice. One of the most important insights that feminism taught me is that “the personal is political.” This came from the revelation of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s that women gaining equality in the public sphere with men was insufficient, if not nonsensical, because it was the intimate and interpersonal dynamics between men and women through sex, through the family, at home, in the “private” sphere that imprisoned and subordinated women. This means, for men, that we need to consider how we are in our “private” lives just as much as how we are in our more “public” lives at work, in the classroom, and so forth, when thinking about this issue of what our political ought to be.

And I think, when considering this issue in the context of sexual politics, I think we need to frame it as Robert Jensen puts it (Jensen, 2007, p. 135): “Can we be more than just johns?” I don’t think we can be for gender justice if we use pornography, buy women in prostitution, or go to strip clubs. I have no idea how many male accounting scholars might be doing so but if we’re a normal cross-section of the male population, I would think a lot of us would be doing at least one of these things. You can’t prostitute women and be for gender justice. When you use pornography, go to strip clubs, or buy women in prostitution, you are contributing to the prostitution of women – to keeping some women at the bottom and ensuring that you are above them. As Andrea Dworkin said : “What prostitution does in a society of male dominance is that it establishes a social bottom beneath which there is no bottom. It is the bottom. Prostituted women are all on the bottom. And all men are above it. They may not be above it much but even men who are prostituted are above the bottom that is set by prostituted women and girls. Every man in this society benefits from the fact that women are prostituted whether or not every man uses a woman in prostitution. This should not have to be said but it has to be said: prostitution comes from male dominance, not from female nature. It is a political reality that exists because one group of people has and maintains power over another group of people.”

Stopping from using pornography and other forms of prostitution is only the start too. It’s only the minimum. This is because feminism isn’t a “lifestyle” choice. It isn’t the individualistic liberalistic approach of just changing your own personal behaviour through modifications like this. Feminism is organizing collectively around

specific issues in order to move toward the goal of ending male supremacy and through it to eradicate sexism from the face of the earth. For men, this means moving on from here to consider all the various ways that we might be falling into the masculinity trap – identifying with male dominance – and to explore and begin to struggle to break out of it. You don't do this individually, on our own. We can only do this together. If male accounting scholars want to make their research more politically engaged we need to find ways of working for and with feminists and feminist organizations who are fighting sexism on the ground. And we don't even need to look afield. There are some amazing feminist accounting scholars, some of whom are about to retire, that we could try to work with, or at the very least learn from, as to what to research and how to research in ways that are consistent with the goals and values of feminist politics.

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