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**WOMAN AS SUBJECT/OBJECT:  
A CRITIQUE OF FEMINIST WRITINGS ON  
PROSTITUTION AND PORNOGRAPHY**

**Chris Bruckert  
1991**

**Submitted to the Department of Criminology,  
University of Ottawa,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts**



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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA  
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

**WOMAN AS SUBJECT/OBJECT**  
**A CRITIQUE OF FEMINIST WRITINGS ON PROSTITUTION AND PORNOGRAPHY**

Chris Bruckert  
University of Ottawa  
Department of Criminology

The construction of woman as object/other in the dominant discourse is an accepted problematic in feminist scholarship. This is understood to be a function of the androcentric nature of the academic, linguistic and social spheres that mediate our understanding/experience. In this context, reality is dichotomized, and woman is the object/other against which man identifies himself as subject. This consciousness poses a fundamental epistemological challenge to feminist scholars: how to construct woman as the subject of discourse and overcome woman's deeply rooted social definition and consciousness of object/other.

The positions and understandings of contemporary feminist theory on how to actualize this understanding in praxis are reviewed and a typology considered that assesses feminist thought in relation the conceptualization of woman and strategies to construct woman as the subject in discourse.

A sample of feminist writings on prostitution and pornography are analyzed to determine if the ideological and epistemological assumptions of the dominant discourse, rejected in feminist theory, are reproduced in substantive applications of feminism.

It is argued that in much of the feminist prostitution and pornography literature reviewed, skin and sex trade workers are denied legitimacy and voice; they are the deconstructed subject who is symbol/victim/object. Further there is a failure to transcend the conceptual boundaries of androcentric thought and therefore the dominant constructs are implicitly legitimated.

It is concluded that some of the current applications of feminist theory contravenes the established political/personal mandate of feminism to redefine woman as the subject of discourse. It is suggested that a feminist framework is required that is conscious of itself, its own ideology, socially imposed parameters and its relation to the dominant discourse against which it defines itself.

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I identified with men, used their eyes. I was sliced in two. Half of me was a like a man surveying the passive half of me as a woman-thing....I caught myself going to watch another woman as if I were a man.....I was experiencing the situation....through men's eyes.... Catching myself observing myself desiring one of myselfes I remained poised for an instant in two halves.

Women's Consciousness, Men's World  
Sheila Rowbotham 1973:40

## INTRODUCTION

The introductory quote presents a concrete illustration of the central focus of this thesis, the tension between woman as subject and woman as object.

This thesis is an extension of an earlier attempt to apply my feminist perspective to an analysis of prostitution. It is not aiming for academic 'breakthrough' or even insight, but to address and resolve at an abstract level some of the conceptual difficulties, inconsistencies and contradictions I encountered. The thesis is grounded in the feminist tradition of critical introspective analysis and in the belief that continual reevaluation contributes to the development of a comprehensive understanding, and is essential to minimizing the negative consequences of some forms of feminist knowledge. There is no intent to discredit feminist analysis or to question the validity of this perspective. Rather to contribute to scholarship that extends the boundaries of feminist thought through critique.

In this thesis the understanding of the subject/object tension will be employed to develop an analysis of selected feminist criminological writings. Feminist work within criminology frequently gives voice to the social construction of women as object: from this perspective woman is unable to be the creator, definer (subject) of discourse. Instead she reflects, is defined

definer (subject) of discourse. Instead she reflects, is defined by, and defines herself in relation to a discourse informed by male experience. Consequently, woman identifies herself as other - an alienating and limiting position, which is internalized and acted upon by female (and male) social actors. The resulting self concept clearly conflicts with the feminist political/personal agenda to discover subject/woman in discourse.

The pervasiveness of patriarchal ideology, and the situational reality of the women who attempt to create knowledge, renders its transcendence highly problematic. The academic disciplines and institutions that inform knowledge and ideology are androcentric: they reproduce gender relations, and define woman as objects.

Criminology, academically as well as in practice, is sensitized to neither gender nor women. Research is almost always conducted from a male perspective. The result is a tendency to generalize findings derived from exclusively male samples or to use a mixed sample without acknowledging the gender variable, or simply to ignore women. Supposedly global theories of crime and/or deviance are generated without reference to female behaviour, and are frequently suspect when women are considered. Traditionally studies that explore female crime specifically are characterized by stereotypical portrayals, distortions of motives, the assumption of sexual deviancy and a reliance on psychological/biological explanation (for a complete analysis see Smart 1976b; Daly & Chelsey-Lind 1988).

This dynamic is clearly not restricted to criminology. In philosophy, the dismissal of women's reality is exemplified by the focus on death as opposed to birth (Finn, 1962b:167). Man's biological marginality in the sphere of creating life would appear to preclude its presentation as a valued, transcendent experience. Psychiatry mediates between experience and reality in a manner that invalidates female experience, decontextualizes it and names these (unnamed) feelings as symptomatic of pathology, thereby providing ideological and repressive interpretations for women's negative understanding their subjugation (Smith, 1975:9). Sociology develops understandings of the social world from the perspective of men and generalizes this to women. Considerable evidence supports the contention that women have been effectively "kept off the historical record" (Spender, 1982a:14). Language constitutes encoded concepts that are consistent with male experience. In essence:

The status of women as political and rational agents cannot cease to pose problems while the domains of politics and rationality are constructed as masculine and as pertaining to men rendering the domains of domesticity and sensuality feminine and pertaining to women

Subject, Body and the Exclusion of Women  
Hodge, 1988:153

In light of the above-detailed context we must question the feasibility of women defining themselves as anything other than object. Despite the consciousness of feminism, feminist work often remains within the dominant patriarchal discourses and the agenda set by this context. In this thesis it will be argued that feminist

epistemologies dispute the definition of specific terms or concepts without challenging the essence of the constructs themselves, and therefore rarely transcend the conceptual framework of the dominant discourses. There is an identified need, therefore, to move beyond the overt and standardized presentation of women to a critique and analysis of the underlying androcentric conceptualizations and the dichotomous nature of the frameworks which inform knowledge - constructing/ dividing the social world into a series of discrete and oppositional categories.

Given the inadequacy knowledge, a uniquely women's epistemology threatens to reverse, not eliminate gender-based bias. It will be argued therefore, that woman must be constructed as the subject of discourse in a manner that is herstorically and socially located (Alcoff, 1988:276) and employs an interplay between subjective experience and objective constructs. Through such non-sexist epistemologies women can realize transcendence and men achieve humanness in a manner that is not contingent on oppression. Overcoming women's epistemologically grounded and socially realized 'false' consciousness, is however personally and politically threatening to the male-defined social order, and to women themselves since such awareness forces the questioning and reevaluation of women's knowledge, sense of self, and identity as women and necessitates coming to terms with women's complicity in their own subjugation.

Michel Foucault focused on the manner through which power is created and sustained. He understood power to be relational -

diffused throughout society, and therefore an inevitable element of social interaction. Knowledge can be understood as instrumental in this dynamic. Discourse, to the extent that it "is a political commodity ... which construct(s) programs for the formulation of social reality" (Gordon, 1980:245) constitutes power/knowledge when it is understood as valid. It is not a question of monolithic truth, but rather of how the social value assigned truth permeates these social constructs with power (Smart, 1989:9). Feminism and criminology both constitute systems of knowledge/power that can be understood in Foucauldian terms as part of the 'modern episteme' - new fields of exploration and surveillance, realized in control.

These insights of Foucault provide the context and justification for the contention, central to this paper, that the power/knowledge of the feminist discourse must be deconstructed; when we create a discourse/knowledge we must remain cognisant of the assumption of power. This thesis will seek to analyze the implications of the acceptance of the claim that feminism speaks the truth about women through its ability to realize in theoretical and concrete terms women's private/public reality.

The question of whether ideology can be sufficiently abstracted from our knowledge to allow demystification remains a central challenge for feminist scholars. This awareness of the political nature of epistemological assumptions, and of the power of discourse suggests the need for alternatives. This simple conclusion proves highly problematic in practical terms, and is the site of theoretical conflict among feminist academics.

This thesis will focus on how the tension of woman as subject/object is worked out in feminist work in the field of criminology, and how the implicit/explicit conceptualizations and subtext contribute to, or distract from, the development of holistic, gender sensitive non-sexist epistemologies.

The initial chapter is divided into two parts. In the first, a review of the feminist literature will outline the understandings of this scholarship in relation to the subject/object dimension. A focus on the theoretical, philosophical, herstorical and material foundations is central to locating the dynamic in an epistemological context which is understood by feminist scholars to be instrumental in creating and maintaining the status of women as other. The latter element will primarily be developed in relation to dichotomized thought which establishes many of the parameters of our conceptualization of the social world. The second part of the first chapter will present a typology for accessing feminist thought in relation to its articulated, or assumed, position on the construction of woman in discourse. A number of prevalent feminist orientations will be explored to determine the implications of utilizing these existing theoretical frameworks to actualize female transcendence in discourse.

In the methodology chapter a variety of insights developed in the field of socio-linguistics will be discussed. Relevant strategies will be incorporated into a framework for the examination of some of the feminist literature on prostitution and pornography.

The two subsequent chapters will apply the methodological and theoretical frameworks to examples of feminist ideological construction of social issues. More specifically, the thesis will examine feminist literature on pornography and prostitution. It is understood that although these practices/experiences are not necessarily criminalized, they are conceptualized as deviant in the dominant feminist, criminological and malestream discourses and targeted by the social control apparatus. These practices in many ways epitomize the extension of the general association of women with sexuality into the sphere of deviancy.

In the conclusion, the findings will be reviewed and their implications assessed. The need for alternate methodological and ideological approaches to criminology, which acknowledge the subject/object tension, defines woman as subject, and are internally consistent with non-sexist epistemology will be considered.

The criminological work from a feminist perspective and concerning the explicitly gendered issues of prostitution and pornography can be assumed to constitute a 'best case scenario'. If woman is a constructed object, and a deconstructed subject in this literature, then this understanding is liable to be reproduced in malestream criminology. Feminist theory and understanding are gaining some credibility, and are increasingly being integrated (appropriated?), at least at the level of rhetoric into the academic practices and theories of malestream criminology. Care must be taken at this juncture that this potentially positive

dynamic does not implicitly continue to construct woman as object. If we adopt feminist theories that have not resolved this dilemma there is a real possibility that woman/object will be further legitimated through the presumption that this criminology is informed by feminist philosophy.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

This thesis is grounded in the assumption that, given the conscious efforts of feminist scholarship to create woman as the subject of discourse, the subject/object dichotomy provides a useful point of departure for the examination of feminist pragmatic and theoretical work. This approach will allow us to locate this tension herstorically and to contextualize it in the reality of a social world that functions to replicate current forms of social relations, and will serve as the framework for the subsequent analysis.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first will detail the herstorical and philosophical roots of, and the current feminist position on, the subject/object tension. While acknowledging that feminism is not a single epistemology there are identifiable positions, and some consensus, on this dynamic. The second part of the chapter will assume a position outside of feminist thought to examine the impact and implications of the understanding of woman as the object of the dominant discourse on feminist theory and practice.

PART ONE

## SUBJECT/OBJECT

The subject/object dichotomy was first articulated in The Second Sex (1952), Simone de Beauvoir's classic text. She argued that man's identity as subject is grounded in the definition of woman as object: "here is to be found the basic trait of women: she is other in a totality of which the two components are necessary for each other" (de Beauvoir, 1952:xix). This fundamental element renders all subsequent social understanding necessarily limited. De Beauvoir attempted to make sense of woman's inability to transcend the confines of this definition and her association with the body. She located the obstacles to the development of consciousness in: women's dispersal among men; physical weakness; reproductive capabilities; lack of resources; insufficient personal and political freedom; and a lack of anger which in itself is a testament to patriarchal mystification (de Beauvoir, 1952:590). Ultimately woman justifies her being most readily within the existing social discourses.

De Beauvoir suggests that the development of a feminist consciousness is fundamentally threatening to women. Consciousness would require the abandonment of the few precious advantages women experience through their association with the dominant gender. De Beauvoir identifies women's vicarious experience of transcendence through love and connection to men to be a partial, non-threatening compromise. Consequently women, while complicit with their

subjugation habitually experience conflict between ego, desires, and self-denying reality.

Philosophically, de Beauvoir's understanding is grounded in the work of Hegel as mediated by Sartre. Hegel's classic notions of slave-master conflict, the development of selfhood through surviving the threat of death, and the transcendence of the physical sphere, are central components of de Beauvoir's argument. Sartrean (1965) philosophy suggests that the life and death struggle can only be resolved satisfactorily for one contender the subject or observer; the loser is relegated to the role of object or other. The observed object can mirror, but not experience, selfhood. Transcendence then entails both the refusal to be objectified and the objectification of the other. In de Beauvoir's application of this model, she suggests that as a consequence women's social position and acceptance of the dominant ideology, the philosophical conceptualisation of gender struggle is rarely translated into tangible conflict (de Beauvoir, 1952:xxi).

It must be recognized that although the subject/object dichotomy is an identified issue in much of the feminist work there are some well developed arguments against its validity. For example, Genvieve Lloyd's (1984) philosophical critique is centred on de Beauvoir's understanding and application of Hegel's work. Lloyd questions the absolute freedom and transcendence of the Sartrean vision, and suggests that women's inability to transcend is grounded in social reality, culture, gender constructs and our (forced) immersion in the concrete - not in disinterest or

inability to realize selfhood (Lloyd, 1984:54). Dorothy McCall (1979) notes that de Beauvoir's failure to question the relative value assigned to the taking, rather than giving of life in philosophy, essentially reproduces misogynist perceptions.

Mary O'Brien (1981), suggests that the duality de Beauvoir presents as an universal human condition is in reality a male attribute. For O'Brien, de Beauvoir's innovative but unquestioned acceptance of Sartrean philosophy, and her conceptualization of man as untroubled by female reproductive capabilities, are problematic. She suggests that the solutions proposed by de Beauvoir imply that the only viable channel for women's transcendence is through the repetition of man's experience.

#### DICHOTOMIZED THOUGHT

There is significant feminist scholarship that expands on the insights articulated in The Second Sex. A central premise of this work is that our social world and reality is conceptualized in dichotomous terms. This polarity is seen as both symptomatic of malestream thought, and as contributing to, the subjugation of women. The term 'malestream' has been coined to reflect the understanding developed throughout this thesis that the dominant ideology and knowledge are androcentric and do not reflect the reality/experience of women.

The social world is constructed as a binary reality, constituting a series of mutually exclusive categories. The dominant definition of women as the opposite of man justifies

female objectification and denies her status as subject. These dichotomies, including; mind/body, male/female, culture/nature, objectivity/subjectivity, whore/madonna - organize malestream thought and will be employed to structure this analysis.

### **Male/Female**

Feminism clearly distinguishes between biological sex and social gender. Within malestream thought, sex and gender are conflated - differences in social roles, desires, interests, identity are constructed as 'natural'. An essentially minimal difference justifies dichotomizing humanity with masculinity and femininity and the perception of these as polar opposites - the inversion of one another. Geraldine Finn (1985) queries "Why insist that there be two sexes if not so that one can be subjected to the other?" (Finn, 1985:82). Woman is the mirror image of man. This notion of mirroring is conceptually tied to the social definition and role of woman. Man understands himself in relation to object/woman. Her status as an object is imperative for the continuation of his sense of self and value. Considered in light of Hegel's master-slave analogy this would suggest that whereas the master's (male) primary identity is located in his master-status, the slave's (female) self-concept is not defined by this relationship. Therefore the retention of malestream organization and understanding of gender relations is clearly imperative for male, but not female, social actors.

Women are well socialized to reflect "men at twice their size" (Cline & Spender, 1987:10) by supporting, enhancing, and

encouraging, the individual and collective male ego. Women smile to assure individual men of their importance, value and desirability: "twentieth century white women's smile is the equivalent of the nineteenth century black servant's shuffle" (Cline and Spender, 1987:98). Women also smile at other women, however according to Cline and Spender (1987) the reciprocal nature of this interaction and the relatively equal distribution of intra-gender power, assures that the symbolic meaning is fundamentally different.

The dominant model of the hairless, sexual woman reflects youth and functions to emphasise the relative power and status of the male (Bartky, 1988:73). Age could be associated with wisdom and power: in western patriarchies, however, older women are, by definition unbeautiful, undesirable and disempowered, the attempt to retain ideal female 'status' (youth, body) is the subject of humour. The older woman who has outlived her usefulness as a whore or madonna is conceptualized as either mother or witch.

Women's bodies are produced and presented in a manner that amplifies the male, regardless of the social or physical costs. The ideal woman is weak and small, thereby exaggerating/reflecting male strength and size. Women who fail to fulfil this mirror/magnifying function risk negative social, economic, emotional and physical consequences. At the same time women are implicitly corrupted by this process, since the "mirror" also reflects man within woman. Charles Cooley (Rosenburg et. al., 1983:158) theorized that the process of our physiological construction occurs in relation to others. For women the "looking glass self" is an essentially

devalued, mutated image, the embodiment of that which is not male/human.

#### **Culture/Nature**

In the dominant discourse, man is associated with culture. In contrast woman is nature/natural, an understanding usually justified by biological rhetoric. However women's experience/understanding of nature/natural processes is appropriated and controlled, both ideologically and actually in patriarchal society. If she is nature she must be controlled by culture. To illustrate, woman's joy/experience of her body/nature, in pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, is mediated by her consciousness of the devaluation of her body/object. The natural and profound physical impact of child bearing is not acknowledged. A pre-pregnancy body forever sought, the symbol of youth and ideal womanhood. Women's experience of being/body is undermined and intertwined with the cultural definition of her body as a source of male pleasure, and as the basis of her value and self-concept.

In the dominant discourse, woman is associated with nature which allows the projection of man's 'base' self onto her, resulting in an image that is at times contradictory and conflicting - she is both maternal and sensual; good and evil; temptress and redeemer; madonna and whore. That the presentation of woman as 'the dark side' of man flourishes at times of social, gender or environmental crises exemplifies the extent to which the image of women is an ideological instrument of control (Bordo, 1988:106).

### Madonna/Whore

Patriarchy is grounded in a fundamental manner in the ideological and substantive appropriation of woman's reproductive capabilities by the male hierarchy. Quite simply, the rule and lineage of the father and his 'immortality' can only be actualized if paternity can be assured. Women are therefore afforded both tangible and intangible rewards for their conformity to the dictates of female purity. Accepted as legitimate the construction assumes its own dynamic including the stigmatization of women who violate the imposed and constructed morality.

In this manner sexuality becomes a gender specific dimension used to define, describe, and - because the ascribed statuses are not value neutral but decidedly value laden - to assess women. In patriarchal thought male sexual behaviour is constructed as occurring on a continuum, by contrast women's behaviour is polarized into two mutually exclusive categories.

The benefit of being a 'good girl' are real only in relation to the experience of 'bad girls' - other women who do not enjoy this status. Further, since female sexuality is considered determinant, the designation 'whore' becomes an overriding definition. It is employed to segregate, dismiss and delegitimize the experience, understood reality in fact the very humanness, of women whose sexual or social behaviour is constructed in this manner. The acceptance of this dichotomy creates a caste of 'throw away women'. Sheila Jeffreys (1985) suggests that the division between pure and fallen women is important for the maintenance of

male supremacy, by splintering the solidarity of women men ensure that women do not join together to challenge patriarchal power (Jeffreys, 1985:60).

### **Mind/Body**

Historically, philosophy has been the domain of the elite, or of those whose ideological association with this strata renders their respective understandings conceptually indistinguishable. In the tradition of philosophy the notion of 'human' is implicitly defined in an exclusive, gender and class specific manner.

Man is identified as mind (reason) which sacrifices/dominates body and is freed from its constraints. This theme is illustrated by Descartes:

On the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, so far as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing and on the other hand I have a distinct body, insofar as this is simply extended non-thinking thing. And accordingly it is certain that I am really distinct from my body and can exist without it.

Descartes quoted in  
Subject Body and the Exclusion of Women  
 Hodge (1988:158)

Given our commodified society, it is problematic to suggest middle class males' body perception is inherently healthy and therefore unaffected by the social dynamics of 'body beautiful'. However, man can improve himself through his body; woman is body, her value, personality and humanness are measured in relation to this dimension. The recent emphasis on fitness has not transformed this dynamic, rather it has increased the pressure on women. Now she must be healthy and fit as well as slim, beautiful, well-groomed, made-up and 'feminine'.

It may be postulated that man's relationship to his own body is reenacted in his interaction with woman who is defined by the malestream ideology as only body - the projection of that which man seeks to deny in himself, the natural, physically constrained, essential body (Reynaud, 1981:16). He must therefore re-form, re-create, make-up and control body/woman. Perhaps it is woman's own identification as body/object, and the alienation this entails, which is the greatest obstacle to the development of woman as subject.

Geraldine Finn (1985) notes that accessories (jewellery) and appearance criteria (make-up) mark women in western patriarchies as sex object (Finn, 1985:83). Sandra Bartky (1988) in her feminist analysis applies Foucault's understanding of the internalized modern discipline imposed on the body. She argues that modern society creates a situation of extreme alienation for women from their bodies. The body is denied the rest and food it craves and through diet and exercise it becomes the enemy that must be moulded. Women discipline their bodily movements and behaviour to assure the consumption of limited physical space and to gain access to social space. Compliance with the standards of make-up, hair dressing and body clothing, creates the woman as an ornament. The woman who perpetually checks her appearance, ever conscious of herself as a viewed object, provides a prime instance of Foucault's internalized panopticon metaphor (Bartky, 1988:81).

Susan Bordo (1988:93) suggests that anorexia nervosa epitomizes woman's experience of the body as an entity to be

controlled and dominated. In the process however she experiences increased alienation, disassociation, and eventual 'triumph' only through the elimination of this embodied reality (Bordo, 1988:93). As is consistent with the dominant male image, a man's efforts to assume control of his body frequently result in increased strength/health, rendering him 'plus-male', enhancing his already substantial status. Woman's assumption of control by contrast may jeopardize health, quite literally result in death, and still renders her 'only-woman', reinforcing the constraints of constructed womanhood.

The ideology and practice of female body discipline functions to control, define and subjugate women. Notably:

....the provision of a beautiful or sexy body gains a woman attention and some admiration but little real respect and rarely any social power. A woman's effort to master feminine body discipline will lack importance just because she does it: her activity partakes of the general depreciation of everything female....women are ridiculed and dismissed for their interest in 'trivial' things like clothes and make-up"

Foucault, Feminity and Modernization  
of Patriarchal Power  
Sandra Bartky (1988:73)

Women who reject the body/object definition, and refuse to comply with these dictates, risk sanction; whether hidden and implicit, or acknowledged and explicit. Regardless of women's behaviour, social and ideological constructs function to negate her being.

Woman's body can never conform to the changing standards/criteria of acceptability. The ensuing internalized dislike will inevitably profoundly impact a women's sense of value

and self-esteem. Regardless of what else a woman achieves/is, she is always predominantly body - judged by self and others accordingly. Woolf (1989) argues that this form of social control, the focus on the body, increased appearance criteria, and the idealization of female beauty, increases in proportion to women's involvement in the public domain.

Emily Martin (1987) presents an alternative perspective on bodily discipline. She argues that the practice and understandings of modern medicine function to alienate women from their body. In modern medicine woman is denied self determination; her reproductive capabilities are appropriated. For example, during child delivery she is object, body, vessel, the raw material to be manipulated by the doctor who 'delivers' the child. The philosophy of medicine decontextualizes and individualizes female illness and names them 'pathology' without exploring the relationship to the social structure. By not questioning the context, practitioners legitimate the existing social relations (Barrett and Roberts, 1978:42). Hyde (1985) suggests that the image of a healthy adult is male; woman can not be both healthy adult and healthy woman.

The discipline of the body is so diffused and intertwined within social institutions that its abstraction is highly problematic. It is located in the patriarchal social order, not in the power of individual men. The objectification of the female body reflects and perpetuates an unequal social order. Although this ideology is enforced through the denial of economic, emotional and/or social support, women's complicity cannot be dismissed.

Bartky suggests that this is due to socialization. Moreover she argues that regardless of the costs, being a female also offers a sense of empowerment as it provides social rewards and - given that we can only be either male or female - identity (Bartky, 1988:78).

#### KNOWLEDGE

Within dichotomized thought, reason is gendered (male) and associated with truth, science, value, objectivity, the mind and most importantly, with humanness (Finn, 1982a:46); woman is associated with intuition and 'felt' understanding as opposed to knowledge. Finn (1982a) suggests that reason is neither good nor neutral and that this ideological construct is both grounded in gender subordination and functions to perpetuate it. In the dominant post-Enlightenment discourse, reason/science equals truth, thus justifying the dismissal of that which is not reason - nature, matter, woman. Science assumes that truth is a distinct entity which can be revealed - that there exists a concrete monolithic reality. This absolutist understanding of the world thus disqualifies the other voices (Spender, 1982c:24).

Presented as genderless, science is associated with the male pole. Through science man is subject, knower, constructor, and active; woman is by definition, the subject, known, constructed, and passive. The belief in scientific ideology functions in a manner akin to earlier religious justification. Finn (1982c) suggests that science is a sexist, ideologically constructed, legitimated and interwoven with the patriarchal structure (Finn,

1982c:47). Science legitimates the social order through the presentation of partial, biased, politically repressive and gendered knowledge as complete, universal objective and herstorical truth.

It is necessary to question the advantages of scientific thought and methodology. The belief in science dictates the methods by which the knowledge which fundamentally shapes our understanding of the world is created. Finn argues that science with its encouragement of differentiation and abstraction is in fact inherently violent. Through the scientific methods and processes, the object of inquiry is de-contextualized, de-constructed, objectified, controlled and ultimately destroyed (Finn, 1982a:62). If scientific ideology and methodology are inherently violent and dehumanising, then the practice of science and not just its application is untenable.

Hekman (1987) suggests that epistemologically, feminism, like post-modernism, expands sociological understanding beyond the confines of the positivist-humanist debate by questioning scientific methodology, rationality, dichotomized thinking, and the advantages and priority assigned to science. Feminists extend the critique, arguing that post-Enlightenment thought is inherently male, hierarchical and rooted in female subjugation (Hekman, 1987:65).

In contrast to the above position, feminist empiricists do not identify science and scientific methodology as problematic. Their critique focuses on inadequate or "bad" androcentric science

conducted by men. Harding (1986) suggests this position is internally inconsistent - within the scientific framework, the scientist is irrelevant to the inquiry, yet women's involvement in science is strongly advocated from this feminist position. (Harding, 1986:137).

Foucault's insight on the interrelation of knowledge and power has arguably influenced feminist thought. The ability to create knowledge is not gender specific. However, men have the social, economic and political power to encode and perpetuate knowledge from their perspective, and to assure its acceptance as the only valid interpretation of reality. Male knowledge is identified as scientific (objective) and defined as superior to female (subjective) knowledge. The disciplines in which knowledge is generated are androcentric, as is the language used to transmit and encode ideas. This leaves open to question the extent to which ideology can be sufficiently abstracted from knowledge to allow demystification.

#### LANGUAGE

Dale Spender (1980) suggests that the development of symbols to categorize experience may be the central difference between humans and other species (Spender, 1980:52). Language though, is not an autonomous tool and we must be aware of its ideological function. "The vocabulary of a language consists of words that its speakers consider important enough to warrant a unique term for" (Penelope, 1990:90) - it is important to recognize the gender of

the speakers. Men have the power to create language that is consistent with their experience of the world, reflecting and reinforcing woman's status as object and denying her the status of subject.

Language can be analyzed on several different levels. Grammar and syntax, reflect hierarchical gender relations and the primacy granted to the male. Through language, women's words are defined and their discourse trivialized, as chatter, natter, and gossip. The meaning and concepts encoded in language are limited and limiting, restricting what can be articulated and therefore shared. Women lack the language to encode, transmit and name female reality and experience. In language female is forever marked as "minus male" (Penelope, 1990:102). Women, without access to appropriate conceptual frameworks, internalize the oppressive ideology and perpetuate it through language. This dynamic is demonstrated in the discrepancy between the concept encapsulated in the symbol "motherhood" and many women's own experience. Given that in order to make sense of their unnamed and unnameable experience women must individualize their understanding by either denying or re-interpreting their experience of motherhood or alternately define themselves as less than fully female, such partial concepts which are presented as 'truth' function as informal but insidious social control.

To overcome the alienating and self-denying functions of language, feminists argue that women must assume control and utilize language in a self-conscious, vigilant manner. Language's

androcentricity must be exposed and new symbols created that are consistent with female experience. Mary Daly (1985) exemplifies this practice as she freely coins new words, liberally hyphenates and mixes metaphors to reveal the obscured androcentric subtext and create a new (gynocentric?) text.

## PART TWO

### EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The recognition that woman is constructed object of discourse, forces us as feminists to examine what we "know" and how we order, rationalize, experience, conceptualize and methodologically examine our 'reality'. In spite of general agreement that the ensuing epistemological challenge must be addressed, this is a contentious and disputed area which requires an acknowledgement of assumptions and a resolution of fundamental issues:

1. Given the androcentrism of the dominant discourses, can women be "added on" to male theory, or are there fundamental differences which preclude this as a valid approach? For example, do we need unique theories, methods and substantially altered disciplines to explore female criminalization.
2. Given that a subject requires an object for transcendence, can women's status be redefined within a patriarchal social order?

3. Given that the exposure of the oppressive nature of dichotomised thought by extension requires the acknowledgement of other dichotomies (e.g. race, class) that may contravene the personal and political agendas of feminists. Can we have feminist criminology that does not acknowledge and address such issues as the oppression of people of colour by women?
4. Given the limitations of patriarchal language and concepts can there be a feminist discourse within these confines, or must a new language be constructed?
5. Given women's experience of the world, can a feminist epistemology be grounded in the experience of oppression without reproducing woman as other and idealizing subjugation?
6. Given that in the dominant ideology, reason is male, can women's understanding be presented as naturally intuitive, non-rational and different from men's, yet be viable knowledge?
7. Given that a concrete foundation of data is required to ground women's knowledge, what strategies are to be employed (e.g. hermeneutics, psychoanalytic analysis case herstories)?
8. Given that men and women are different, how is this difference to be understood, is it a function of natural biological differences, learned behaviour, or patriarchally imposed conditioning through oppression?

9. Given that women are dispersed and economically/socially associated with individual and collective men, can women have a common culture?
10. Given that women's understanding and experience of reality is valid knowledge, how can women's voices be incorporated into knowledge?
11. Given the need for women's epistemology, how can this be realized without resorting to essentialism?
12. Given that our reality is structured by patriarchy, by whom, and how, is the validity of women's understanding of their experiences to be determined?

This admittedly incomplete list of questions provides an indication of the challenge confronting feminist scholars.

#### FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

Feminist criminology is increasingly, at least rhetorically acknowledged to be a viable framework even if it has not as yet been substantively integrated. It is therefore imperative that these issues are resolved in a manner that remains conscious of the possible implications of the knowledge that is created. The task is enormous:

No matter where we turn to - historical documents, philosophical constructions, social scientific statistics, introspection or daily practices - the mediation of female bodies into constructions of woman is dominated by misogynist discourse.

Cultural Feminism versus  
Post-Structuralism  
Alcoff 1988:258

To date, the awareness of the need for epistemological analysis has not resulted in a single cohesive feminist response. Rather the differences and internal inconsistencies of feminist theory are revealed in the efforts to address this fundamental issue.

Linda Alcoff (1988:259) identifies two responses in feminist scholarship - cultural and post-structuralist feminism. These 'types' are not presented as homogeneous, rather she argues that their positions on how woman is constructed/defined in feminist discourse provides legitimate criteria for categorization. The distinction centres on divergent strategies for the construction of woman, the validity afforded the male/female dichotomy and the acceptance of gender-specific characteristics. This typology will be developed and will structure the ensuing discussion on the feminist literature reviewed on prostitution and pornography, facilitating an analysis that is not contained within the traditional liberal/radical/socialist debate.

In cultural feminist work, such as O'Brien (1981) and Daly (1985) woman and 'female characteristics' are idealized and socially generated gender diversity celebrated. The ultimate goal of cultural feminists is a social order where women are accorded status equal to that of men without assuming identical material or social reality.

Cultural feminism idealizes female aspects developed in the context of women's oppression in patriarchy. Hegel's master-slave analogy applied to gender would suggest that subordination may be

empowering and positive if it facilitates a more complete vision and that a value exists in this experience: "the sexual division of labour uniquely made available to women a vision of the real social relations" (Hartsock, 1987:157).

This perspective entails an acceptance of gender differences justified by biology. Linda Alcoff (1989) notes that dichotomy is legitimated through the reliance on anatomy to justify the position on the essential woman (Alcoff, 1988:262). Transcendence of the body is not sought, rather the female body is central to discourse, language and meaning - a source of empowerment. This orientation seeks to reclaim the power appropriated by men to describe and define women by developing a women's epistemology which is grounded in a feminist or women's standpoint. This notion of a standpoint assumes the possibility of defining women's reality and assumes a commonality of experience (Hartsock, 1987:159).

The above-detailed position is problematic in light of the heterogeneity of womankind, this potentially limiting position mystifies rather than clarifies. It reinforces dominant white, middle-class views, obscures the diversity of individual experiences of oppression and the power base of these feminist authors (Klein, 1989:48).

The belief in an essential female, potentially replicates and legitimates biological determinism, and defines woman as body - albeit a positive one (Kelly, 1983:13). The assumption of shared experience connected with the body and the ensuing search for the

essential female reproduces the dichotomies and legitimates socially constructed gender.

Radical and liberal feminist theories are increasingly located in the cultural feminist framework, with their theories and strategies oriented to empowering women through the elevating the female 'essence'. However, neither necessarily functions in relation to this understanding.

Radical feminist scholars are acutely conscious of the subject/object tension and strive politically and practically to overcome this dichotomy (see for example Daly 1980). Inherent to this perspective, however, is the danger of objectifying non-feminist women and men and achieving subject-agency at their expense. Heterosexuality as understood to be an oppressive social dynamic that connects women to men, and divert attention away from the political battle. By extension this suggests that women's emancipation can only be realized through homosexual social relations (see for example Brown, 1976:290). This conceptualization continues to define women primarily in terms of their sexuality (Hughes, 1982:291) - the very definition central to female subordination in patriarchy. It therefore maintains the polarity of malestream thought, abandons the political arena in favour of the politicized private sphere, and assumes a biological base to the ability to empathise and understand gender oppression. This latter issue is particularly ironic in light of radical feminists' (belated) argument for the inclusion of the reality of women of colour into their analysis despite fundamental biological and

experiential differences. Notably this presumption of transcendence is not generalized to men.

Separatist feminists, argue that women can never define themselves while confined within the patriarchal social structure. Mary Daly (1985) proposes the development of a new psychic (and physical) time/space "on the boundaries" (Daly, 1985:xx) of male defined institutions and disciplines. This 'fluid dimension' would allow women to overcome their false consciousness and to see and name reality in a manner not feasible within the confines of patriarchy. Daly's understanding implicitly reaffirms dominant values and concepts. The free flowing intelligence unfettered by male defined reality and body she envisions is oppositional rather than liberating, and is consistent with malestream values (mind) and dichotomized thought.

Recent liberal (welfare) feminist work despite its ultimate political goal of the merging of male and female characteristics into an androgenous society (Tong, 1989:31), recognizes that the lived experience of gender bias and the consequences of socialization in patriarchal society must be addressed. Liberal feminist scholarship such as that of Betty Friedan (1981) pressures for legal and social recognition and compensation for structural impediments and for equal status afforded male and female characteristics and roles. The acceptance of the "equal but different ideology" (Tong, 1989:23) which is consistent with cultural feminist assumptions, can be understood as a strategy rather than a guiding principle. Nonetheless by assuming this

position the male/female dichotomy is reinforced.

According to Brenda Almond (1988) the implications of the cultural feminist discourse means that we must "..... accept an ultimate sexual apartheid as far as ethical values are concerned" (Almond, 1988:42).

Post-Structuralist feminism, seeks to deconstruct woman, arguing that "feminist and misogynist attempts to define woman are politically reactionary and ontologically suspect" (Alcoff, 1988:259). This scholarship, grounded in the french post-structuralist tradition, rejects biological determinism. The position advocated is that, since polarized thought functions to reproduces ideology in which women are defined as object, its use undermines any attempt to realize an alternate non-oppressive conceptualization of the social world. This framework seeks to transcend the body through valued mental abilities.

Spelman (1982) argues that somatophobic feminists reject the body/mind dichotomy, yet implicitly function in relation to this construct. Through the desire to transcend the body (as in de Beauvoir), both the dichotomy and the relative value of the physical realm are reinforced. Notably absent from such feminist analysis is the acknowledgement that the dichotomized body/mind identifies not only women, but other devalued groups with the physical domain (e.g. labourers). Recognition of this commonality would facilitate the contextualization of women's experience within broader structures and forms of oppression, however it would also necessitate a reassessment of the values and ideology functional to

the predominantly white, middle-class forms of feminism. Arguably, ideology grounded in negating the value of one's body, can only function in relation to another body. In reality, the physical realm and needs are not transcended: they are merely displaced onto the underclass.

Jean Grimshaw (1988) suggests that this perspective is derogatory to women - dismissing their lives and scholarship: in post-structuralist feminism, women can not be autonomous since their 'self' is mutated and submerged through externally imposed and internalized oppression (Grimshaw, 1988:93).

Philosophically, liberal feminism is grounded in the 'individualism' of liberal thought. Traditional liberal feminism rather than seeking to transcend dichotomized thought, dismisses the validity of these constructs, addresses the gender-determined separate spheres through theory and legal action (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988:537), and strives to overcome the conflation of gender and sex which legitimates discrimination against women (Tong, 1989:29). As such it fails to account for women's internal discipline; the dichotomy of the body/mind; nor the maleness of epistemology developed earlier in this chapter. Liberal feminism rejects the social division between men and women yet remains firmly established and philosophically bound to dominant ideology. This dynamic is illustrated in the value assigned paid employment in liberal feminist analysis. By not extending beyond the conceptual frameworks of the dominant thought such liberal feminism reproduces and legitimates that which it fails to acknowledge.

A potent criticism is offered by Alcoff (1988) who argues that post-structuralism is problematic because it is essentially a negative struggle, she asks: "how can we ground a feminist politics that deconstructs the female subject. Nominalism threatens to wipe out feminism itself" (Alcoff, 1989:271).

Hekman (1987) and Alcoff (1988) suggest that neither of these discourses is adequate to address the fundamental issue of the construction of woman in discourse. While post-Enlightenment dualistic thought can legitimately be critiqued, to deny the dichotomous nature of dominant conceptual frameworks that construct our reality is also problematic. However, given the fallibility of human thought, a uniquely women's or feminist epistemology will reverse, not eliminate, deception and bias and is ultimately counter productive.

To overcome the inadequacies of current feminist strategies to create woman as the subject of discourse, it is important that subjectivity is located herstorically and socially (Alcoff, 1988:276). There is a need to articulate an epistemology that utilizes the interplay between subjective experience and objective constructs. The term 'non-sexist epistemologies' will be employed to capture the sense that this knowledge must be gender sensitive, not gendered and transcend the conceptualization of the social world as constituting two mutually exclusive categories.

The position assumed by Susan Hekman (1987) is that a truly non-sexist epistemology can only be realized through a new

discourse: not androgenous which obscures differences but rather one that would entail:

a pluralist position in which the diversity of knowledge (reason, logic, intuition, empathy) and moral qualities would be associated with persons, not sexes. ....Only such a radical step can shatter the sterile dogmatism of Enlightenment epistemology and the patriarchal culture it supports.

The Feminization of Epistemology  
Hekman (1987:81).

Carol Gilligan's (1975) discovery of a 'different voice', does not suggest gender specific moral deficiency but rather implies the existence of a continuum of complementary perspectives which, in total, represent a whole.

It is only through truly non-sexist epistemologies that women can realize transcendence: moreover, only in this manner can men realize a humanness that is not contingent on oppression. Through non-sexist epistemologies: "if we do our work well, 'reality' will appear even more unstable, complex and disorderly than it does now. In this sense perhaps Freud was right when he declared that "women are the enemies of civilization" (Flax, 1978:643). Prior to the development of non-sexist epistemologies, however, we must analyze if feminist scholarship mirrors malestream ideology and concepts and constructs woman as object.

#### CONCLUSION

The manner in which some feminist authors in criminology resolve, accommodate, or ignore the social construction of woman as objects is central to this thesis. The hypothesis is that the

epistemological developments in the feminist criminological literature sampled are problematic as they fail to overcome women's deeply rooted social definition and consciousness as object/other. It will be argued that de Beauvoir's contention that "the basic trait of women [is that] she is other in a totality of which the two components are necessary for each other" (de Beauvoir, 1952:xi) first articulated in 1949 is a valid description of recent feminist criminology literature. Arguably the failure to address this issue within feminism replicates and legitimizes oppressive ideological constructs.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

Sticks and stones,  
can break my bones,  
but names can never hurt me.

This simple refrain captures the interaction central to the ensuing discussion on language and discourse. Children are aware that this defiant school yard chant is not a true reflection of reality. Rather, it represents a conscious attempt to reestablish personal and social worth by denying the impact of language.

Invested with the power to name/define reality, words can, and do, 'hurt' us individually and/or collectively. By presenting an alternate discourse contained within the parameters established by the dominant conceptual framework, an attempt is made to defuse the definition and assume its power. This process risks the further legitimation and justification of that which the speaker is motivated to discredit.

The socio-political nature of language, conceptual frameworks, and discourse and some of the understandings developed in the socio-linguistic fields of discourse analysis will be explored in

this chapter. Insights garnered from discourse analysis, content analysis, and feminist linguistics will be used to develop a framework to examine the reproduction of woman as object in feminist literature on deviance, specifically pornography and prostitution.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Language transmits ideas, concepts, and 'knowledge' through meaningful verbal sounds or written symbols. Language and words appear to be neutral tools, an understanding which the creators and recipients of discourse unconsciously accept, and therefore implicitly reinforce. The vocabulary of a language reflects and expresses the interests of the dominant group (Spender, 1980:77): the dominant culture encoded in language and reflected in discourse is class, race and gender specific. Trends within each language, or dialect may reflect the need to conceptualize different values, experiences and beliefs (Fowler, 1985:66); however, given the heterogeneous nature of society, what is valued, experienced or believed is unlikely to be consistent. In western patriarchal society, white males have historically had the social, political, economic and ideological power to determine the rules of encoding, and the meaning/content of language. Consequently the knowledge and beliefs transmitted through language are generally consistent with their interests and frame of reference. Through ideology and language this knowledge is constructed as beyond question.

Naming simultaneously facilitates the expression of 'reality',

sets parameters on what can be shared, and determines how reality is conceptualized by describing and defining what makes sense. Language is a powerful instrument that gives voice to both what we 'know' and value. The process of assigning names and value makes language a powerful mechanism of social construction and (perhaps more importantly) for the repression of social diversity:

...in order to live in the world we must name it. Names are essential for the construction of reality for without a name it is difficult to accept the existence of an object, event or feeling...by assigning a name we impose a pattern and a meaning which allows us to manipulate the world.

Speaking Freely  
Penelope, 1990:163

Ironically the impact of naming can be illustrated by the relatively recent encoding of the concepts 'sexism' and 'sexual harassment'. These, strictly speaking gender-neutral terms, capture meanings which name/define male behaviour and attitudes, and not women's complaints or action, as problematic. It is not that concepts do not exist without representative symbols. Rather, it is that the availability of such conceptual frameworks have an impact on the conceptualization and experience of reality and gender relations (Spender, 1985:184). Women may understand their experiences, however, if they do not have a language to encode/express their reality, they must translate it into an androcentric framework for it to be accepted.

According to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (1921), our conceptual structure of the world is largely determined through the language we speak, and the language itself reflects the dominant culture.

Although not developed by Sapir and Whorf, such an understanding has clear implications in the study of gender. This does not presume that language dictates thought: instead the argument is that language encodes conceptual frameworks, the 'natural' understanding, into which the articulators and recipients of discourse 'slip' (Penelope, 1990:203).

Language, action and knowledge are inseparable (Stubbs, 51,1983). The conceptual frameworks utilized in western patriarchies are consistent with male experience even when, as in mothering, the experience itself is uniquely female. This can be understood as both a source, and a manifestation, of woman as other: the ability of women to encode their reality is undermined by the lack of accurate conceptual frameworks. Objective, universal, true, conceptual frameworks in fact represent a partial, monodimensional androcentric reality (Spender, 1985,61).

Minor biological gender differences are constructed in the dominant conceptual frameworks as a logical way to distinguish/dichotomize humanity. Consequently, in the logic of language, "biology determines behaviour, mannerisms, appearance, emotional style, what one wears, and how one thinks" (Penelope, 1990:50). Elshtain (1982) is one of a number of feminist scholars who suggest that feminist, like malestream work, rarely transcends these conceptual constructs. Such feminism disputes the definition of specific terms and boundaries, but not the divisions themselves. This paper, premised on the need for an alternate approach, will seek to move beyond the overt and standardized presentation of

women to a critique and analysis of the underlying androcentric conceptual frameworks which mark the current work on pornography and prostitution.

#### DISCOURSE

Ideology and the dominant discourses exist outside the individual social actors. It follows that discourse is less a creative than a reproductive exercise that sustains relations of domination (Kress, 1985:31). However, since a number of discourses and ideologies may co-exist in a single work, this reconciliation may reveal the depth and the contradictions of scholarship.

Central to modern western social interaction, texts or discourses - speeches, lectures, written dissertations, and conversations are social actions that necessitate the utilization of language to encode and transmit concepts. Discourse functions by virtue of a shared understanding of reality - the words, expressions, context and structure, must be ascribed meaning by the recipient. For example, a written dissertation only constitutes comprehensible viable knowledge if the readers can decode the symbols and assume a similar frame of reference.

The power of the conceptual frameworks presented in discourse is evidenced by the dynamic whereby the feminist critique of the dominant gender discourse functions in opposition to, but not outside of, the conceptual limits established by this frame of reference. Feminist political and academic enquiry may therefore legitimate and reinforce ideology through the act of denial.

### LITERATURE SAMPLE

The articulated goal of analyzing feminist work does not imply that feminism is considered a unified perspective. Feminism which is characterized by diversity and debate and encompasses both strategies for change and theoretical understandings cannot be conceptualized as a monolithic entity. As such, feminism is arguably "easier to define in its absence than in its presence" (Mitchell and Oakly, 1986, quoted in Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988:502). Delmar (1986) offers a useful baseline definition that will be applied in this paper:

A feminist holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have needs which are negated and unsatisfied and that the satisfaction of these needs requires a radical change.

Delmar (1986) quoted in  
Feminism and Criminology  
Daly & Chesney-Lind (1988)

Kathlene Daly and Meda Chesney-Lind (1988;504) identify certain assumptions and principles for differentiating feminist from malestream scholarship. These provide broad criteria for inclusion in this analysis although I will argue that adherence to the fourth criteria is frequently more rhetorical than real. Specifically a feminist orientation assumes:

1. That gender as neither neutral nor natural but a herstorical, social and cultural construct grounded in, and justified by, biology, sex and reproductive capabilities.

2. That gender is central to the organization of society and social institutions.
3. That gender relations are hierarchical - men dominate the social political and economic spheres.
4. That in feminist work women's voice and experience must be central.

Throughout this thesis, reference will be made to dominant discourses, which, for the purpose of this study, will be broadly defined as the preestablished text, or broad framework which is utilized to organize social reality. Dominant discourses reflect the social structure and relations, and constitute the 'legitimate' presentation of an issue, and can not be abstracted from the ideology they reflect. The dominant feminist discourse can therefore be conceptualized as the taken-for-granted understandings which prevail in feminist scholarship.

The feminist pornography and prostitution literature selected for review represents a sample of what I understand to be the prevailing contemporary North American feminist discourse on these subjects. This material meets the criteria of feminist scholarship detailed above. In addition it is frequently referenced in both feminist and malestream work, epitomizes the feminist arguments most frequently presented in the public forum and was published between 1975-1990. I consider it to be the scholarship which is understood by social actors functioning outside of feminism as constituting the feminist perspective. Much of this work falls outside the parameters of criminology, assumes a cultural feminist

perspective and can loosely be classified as radical feminist work. No pretence is made that the study is based on an exhaustive review of the literature or of all the relevant debates within feminism. That is not the goal of this exercise, which sought rather to construct a theoretical critique of a certain analytic form and style.

#### ANALYTIC METHOD

Linguistic content, (what is named) and presentation (what is valued) are recognized by anthropologists to be a rich source of cultural and societal data. Discourse analysis, the study of language "in use" (Van Dijk, 2:1985), is premised on this sociological significance of language.

Discourse analysis can be understood as an analytic tool which is located in broader theoretical frameworks. This complex multifaceted methodology, can be employed to analyze texts, and develop or support theories, through the exposure of the underlying motivation, cognitive and social strategies, and consideration of the implications. The examination of the interrelation between the text subject, funding, theoretical frameworks and socio-political position, goals, and mandate, provides insight into how such interaction is manifested. Such multilevel analysis incorporates structure, content, meaning, function, socio-economic and cultural context (van Dijk, 1983:27). Conversely, the findings and nature of a specific undertaking of discourse analysis are also a function of the theoretical and ideological context in which the researcher is

located. In the ensuing discussion, some of the theories and insights of discourse analysis will tentatively be applied to the specified case studies. Specifically lexicons, the study of the meanings of words and syntax, how the arrangement of words in a text reveal their constructed the meaning, will be examined. These elements provide a point of departure for a multilevel analysis of specific feminist discourses on pornography and prostitution.

The notion of linguistic purity and the relatively recent and arbitrary rules that dictate the correct spelling, grammar, annunciation and vocabulary of the 'mother tongue', function as exclusionary instruments (Penelope, 1990:7) usually grounded in class and one of its (by)products - education. In addition the development, use and status of elaborate terminology or educated language denies powerless agents the tools to create 'legitimate' discourse, effectively maintaining and legitimating the status quo through the retention of the power to define reality. The 'correct', complex language employed in feminist scholarship assures that the power to create the dominant feminist, or women's discourse, is contained and retained within the powerful, white, educated elite.

The world view that to be man is to be human, is reflected/created in english through a number of linguistic traditions including the use of the pseudo-generic 'he', the addition of prefixes and suffixes to establish female gender, a vocabulary which divides experience into gender-specific spheres, the pejorative nature of terms associated with women and the nature of

the symbols employed to depict 'mankind' (Penelope, 1990: xxvii).

The analysis of the well-developed 'male as normative' aspect of language is more consistent with proving the androcentricity of language than the analysis of texts, and will not be further developed in this study. In modern western hetero-patriarchies, feminist authors are afforded the dubious choice of either using patriarchal language, with the attendant risk of reproducing the male as normative, or of refusing to create discourse and therefore effectively being silenced and implicitly supporting the established social and gender relations promoted in discourse.

Gill Seidle (1985) notes that the dominant peoples, the creators of language, are the default, unmarked category. In English the 'other' gender, women, are marked and reference is qualified/specified. From this perspective, all women are marked in discourse (Penelope, 1990:108). However of particular relevance to this discussion is the distinct marking of women outside the dominant patriarchal discourse, such as feminist and single mother. In dichotomized thought, human actors have a limited range of social identities and the further qualification of womanhood impacts on self and social perception, and functions as overriding definitions. The implicit presentation of gender proves to be a rich source of insight into the reproduction of dichotomized gender definitions.

The analysis of the nature of descriptors to determine if they imply a positive or negative assessment in a given text is a commonly used strategy to evaluate biases. It should be noted that,

as the determination of what constitutes fortuitous presentation necessitates value judgements, the findings are liable to reflect the race, class and gender bias of the researchers.

Mary Sykes (1985) advocates the comparison of the actual to the possible range of terms employed in a given discourse. To illustrate, a common expression reproduced in scholarship is that 'prostitutes sell their bodies'. This (negative?) description of a behaviour that does not in fact include the permanent transference of ownership and could more appropriately be defined as 'renting' or the 'providing of a service' suggests the possibility of projected moral judgement.

Presentation is often gender specific. In the dominant hetero-patriarchal discourse, man is conceptualized as being involved in processes, woman by contrast is understood as involved in states (e.g. prostitution, housewife) (Siedel, 1985,54). This effectively obscures power relations and reproduces woman as other. This argument is grounded in the presumption that cognition and understanding are effected by the presentation of material, and therefore that texts are a viable source for inquiry into the reproduction of woman as object.

Agency, meanings and the nature of relationships can be obscured in text. A number of linguistic strategies can be identified as fulfilling this mystifying role including:

1. The succinct presentation of material where the instigator or recipient of action is not specified, obscures agency and allows the dominant discourse to be assumed without justification (Penelope, 1990:145). For example, then the sentence "Pornography magazines are read" is less clear than "Men read pornography magazines".
2. The use of passive sentence construction - object, verb, by agent, rather than the more forceful active construction of agent, verb, object suppresses agency, obscures the responsibility of individuals and focuses attention on the object. For example, 'Joe watched the stripper' more clearly establishes Joe's agency than 'The stripper was watched by Joe'.
- 3) The use of agentless passive motivators relies on the reader's interpretive process and is employed when the specification of the agent and social context is inconsistent with, or would distract from, the position advocated by the author (Penelope, 1990:153). For example, the statement 'prostitutes are degraded' obscures the agent of judgement and the assumptions implicit in this statement.
4. The use of sentence composition that presents opinion as objective facts, thereby elevating a subjective world view to the status of knowledge. The slogan "pornography is the theory, rape is the practice" (Morgan, 1980:131) does not pose a question but presents a 'fact'.

5. The use of intellectual pretentious statements such as 'the research supports', removes the need to substantiate 'facts' (Penelope, 1990:158).
6. The use of adjectives, such as 'victimized prostitute' in a manner that implies that the descriptor is inherent to the noun, rather than the reflection of the author's opinion.

The proceeding list is not intended to suggest a 'linguistic conspiracy'. In fact, Mary Sykes's (1985) analysis of 'liberal' or 'well-meaning' discrimination discourse exposes the potential for a text to be unintentionally negative. Sykes argues a text is demeaning if it defines the oppressed as passive, unable to reflect on the situation or to control circumstances, and lacking independent will. The denial of agency implies a simplified sequence of causal events and obscures the role of relevant actors. Although presumably motivated by the best intentions, the absolving of responsibility undermines the human, conscious status of the discourse subject (object?). The focus on a single characteristic, and the ignoring of class and culture, "dehumanizes referents and represents them as an undifferentiated and faceless collectivity involved in mechanical and inevitable process" (Sykes, 1985:94).

Men are the creators of frames of reference and of the dominant discourse. Women may be the subject of patriarchal discourse, however because meaning and focus remain outside women's sphere of influence, women are the constructed objects.

Julia Penelope (1990) suggests:

To say that men treat us as "objects" who "receive" the actions they perform is accurate enough. But to proceed to say we want to be the "subjects", not the "objects" of discourse won't alter the conceptual structure of PUD [patriarchal universal discourse] because, of course, women are often the subjects of male discourse....we want to be the agents who initiate and carry through our own actions in our own universe of discourse, neither the subjects nor the objects of PUD. (emphasis in original)

Freely Speaking  
Penelope (1990:128)

### FEMINIST DISCOURSES

Scholarship that critically examines the feminist discourse provides a point of departure for this analysis. Jean Elshtain's (1982) analysis of the language, power and meaning of feminist discourse is premised on the presumption that feminist scholarship is powerful instrument of emancipation which has largely not realized its potential to broaden the dominant androcentric discourse. She identifies tendencies within feminist scholarship which function to reinforce the structures of domination. Notably, the tendency to assume a 'mask' of purity, nature or victim rather than establish a dialogue premised on a position of conscious feminism and the confrontation of discourse. "[Feminists must] move beyond discourse as domination or as masked, and towards speech as an emancipatory effort" (Elshtain, 1982:665).

The liberal feminist tradition has adopted some of the confining language of the social sciences. This facilitates an extension of the boundaries of understanding, but does not provide conceptual frameworks which transcend the dominant discourse. To discuss 'roles' effectively presents humans as functioning within

preestablished scripts. Human experience is too complex and multifaceted to be captured in such a simplistic understanding.

The radical feminist discourse sacrifices individuality, meaning, and human expression for an equitable gender discourse. The hard macho language and message of this feminist scholarship reproduces male presentation of reality within a feminist context (Elshtain, 1982:611).

The internal inconsistencies inherent to the creation of a new language render the value of this strategy problematic. It entails the encoding of new woman-centred symbols to facilitate the sharing of meaning while simultaneously rejecting human communication through language. This radical feminist approach reproduces, and therefore reinforces, the polarity of patriarchal discourse. The development of holistic non-sexist epistemologies would address the need for the extension/expansion of meaning rather than create a gynocentric language.

The portrayal of women as debased, victimized, and oppressed in feminist scholarship functions in relation to the prevailing evaluative framework. Powerlessness is associated with purity and it is embraced within some feminist scholarship. Arguably such an understanding affords the creators of women's discourse a conceptual framework that 'explains' female experience, eliminates the need for self criticism, and is self-fulfilling and therefore 'true knowledge'. Unfortunately the denial of female responsibility also implicitly negates women's autonomy and agency:

..... our description, gear expectations, foreclose options, or create possibilities, we must evaluate feminist discourse by asking ourselves what it would do for us or other female subjects, if we made a particular characterization of women and their world our own, if we internalized that view of ourselves compared to other possible views. (emphasis in original)

Feminist Discourse and its Discontents  
Elshtain (1982:612)

#### CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion suggests that conceptual frameworks and discourse reflect and perpetuate the social context in which it occurs. The strategies outlined will form a framework for the analysis of the feminist discourses of pornography and prostitution.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### PORNOGRAPHY

Knowledge constitutes power: therefore, both pornography and the feminist discourse on pornography reflect and contain power/knowledge. The ensuing critical examination of the some feminist literature on pornography attempts to explore the possibility that repressive ideology is created or reproduced when one discourse is generated in opposition to another. In my opinion in spite of the commitment of the authors, feminist discourses are not necessarily liberating or empowering: since they may not transcend androcentric conceptual frameworks, they reproduce woman as object.

Pornography is characterized in the feminist literature reviewed as the portrayal of women without choice/autonomy/subjectivity by women (models) without choice/autonomy/subjectivity. The 'truth' of the latter point requires the denial/silencing of divergent knowledge, and the naming/defining of the dynamic of participation in the skin trade in a manner that denies agency and autonomy.

A review of both feminist and malestream work on pornography suggests that the feminist discourse on pornography is dominated by radical feminist theorists working in the cultural feminist

framework. This is not to deny the voice of opposition or to suggest that there is a consensus in feminism on pornography. There are however consistent assumptions, ideologies and conceptualizations in the texts reviewed which justify the analysis of this feminist work as an entity. In spite of reference made to feminist frameworks throughout this paper there is no presumption that the totality of the scholarship is captured. The feminist discourse on pornography has largely, though not exclusively, been generated by reference to radical feminist epistemological assumptions. Andrea Dworkin's influential 1979 text Pornography - Men Possessing Women, defined the parameters and theoretical framework of the debate, and remains the point of departure for more recent work on pornography, including much of the liberal feminist scholarship.

Andrea Dworkin (1979) presents a radical feminist analysis that locates pornography in the broader social, and herstorical context. She argues that in patriarchal societies men have power of: ownership, money, selfhood, physical strength, terror and sex (Dworkin, 1979:56). Male power/violence over women is expressed sexually. For Dworkin pornography is the instrument, symptom and symbol of the subjugation of women by men. Her position that women are objectified in the theory, practice and depictions of pornography, categorically denies the possibility of 'reforming' the institution.

Skin-trade workers are denied a forum in "malestream feminist" literature. This seemingly contradictory notion is intentionally

used to reflect the androcentric subtext and reactionary implications of much of the current feminist scholarship. In this literature skin-trade workers are not subjects who speak their reality and create discourse. Rather they are the objects that 'prove' and legitimate the feminist discourse, they respond to an interpretation that is imposed and does not speak to, or reflect the understanding of the skin-trade workers' lived reality.

Susan Cole (1989) notes that the publication of Pornography and the Sex Crisis, affords her the opportunity to "write it exactly as I see it" (Cole, 1989:8) - the tone of her text, by contrast, suggests she is encoding reality exactly as it is. An established discourse can be conceptualized as a "deposit of power" (Cohen, 1985:87) - knowledge, including the constructing and naming of reality as dichotomized, is instrumental in the negation of alternative understandings. The feminist literature reviewed designates itself as "anti-pornography feminism" (Cole, 1989:9), thereby implying that other conceptualizations are pro-pornography.

The emergence of the feminist discourses on pornography is a product and reflection of social events (such as the 1977 release of Snuff, a pornographic movie which claimed to portray the actual murder of a woman in the name of sexual arousal), and the increasing consciousness of women's objectification. The subsequently formulated feminist theoretical and philosophical framework was appropriate for the analysis of pornography. Most of the texts reviewed for this paper are products of this period; published during the decade spanning 1979 - 1989.

Prior to analyzing pornography it is necessary to operationalize this almost generic term. Most texts offer more or less explicit definitions, although it is often conveyed that, like United States Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, the authors "can't define it, but know it when [they] see it" (quoted in Longino, 1982:26). While there is some diversity in the degree of violence, sex, and/or physical exposure required for a presentation to be interpreted as pornographic, a general, and typically gynocentric, definition would be the

[V]erbal or pictorial explicit representations of sexual behaviour that...have as a distinguishing characteristic the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the adult female...as a mere sexual object to be exploited and manipulated sexually.

Pornography, Oppression and Freedom  
Longino (1982:28)

This definition does not transcend the dominant conceptual frameworks, furthermore the understanding of the meanings encoded in the words 'demeaning' and 'degrading' are socially dictated concepts which are consistent with malestream thought.

Defined in this manner, material does not require a violent component for it to be named pornographic. It is notable that the examples employed in the feminist discourse are more frequently violent and clearly abhorrent, then in pornography itself (Assiter, 1989:75).

In this paper, unless otherwise specified, the workers in the industry are presumed to be women and will be referred to as skin-trade workers. This term acknowledges the reality that, although the woman's presentation and behaviour may be constructed

/interpreted as sexual by the audience, the work itself does not necessarily include a sexual component. Furthermore it is true to the workers' understanding: they may not define, and most probably do not experience, their labour as sexual.

#### WOMEN'S VOICES

The generally acknowledged principle in the human sciences that retrospective accounts may be distorted, and the recognition of the natural human desire to maintain a positive self and public image, establishes the need for a perspective which remains critical but does not negate the participant's voice or understanding.

Linda Lovelace's book Ordeal is an autobiographical account of her involvement in pornography and prostitution. The focus is on her experience as the star of Deep Throat, a pornographic film which achieved unprecedented acceptance and popularity in the 1970's. Lovelace clearly articulates her understanding that she was exploited, coerced and abused - she constructs herself as the ultimate victim of the skin and sex trades. Ordeal is continually referenced and accepted, without qualification in the feminist scholarship, her experience 'proves' that if "it happened to me it could happen to anybody" (Lovelace, 1980:cover).

Arguably it is not coincidental that Lovelace's first person account of the degradation, violence, and inhumanity of the pornography industry is consistent with that of the creators of the feminist literature reviewed. Linda Lovelace does not create an

alternate discourse. Rather, she substantiates the suppositions of the feminist and malestream 'moral majority' that a 'decent' woman must be forced, coerced or threatened to participate in pornography or prostitution. Implicitly denied is the alternate hypothesis that the skin-trade worker is an autonomous actors who maximizes a negative situation.

The resurrection of the whore/madonna dichotomy facilitates dismissal of the voice of the female skin-trade worker who declares herself a free agent. She is a 'whore' who, by the definition of those with the power to name, has no legitimacy - that is, she lacks the power/consciousness to know/name her reality. Catharine MacKinnon contends that Lovelace's words should not be disbelieved because of what "happened to her" (MacKinnon, 1987:132). This does not in reay constitute an attempt to incorporate the perspectives of whores into the feminist world view: Instead we are asked to reexamine Linda Lovelace's status in light of her new consciousness. As a 'reformed' participant, she presumably approximates female purity sufficiently to be afforded legitimacy. In the discourse of the radical feminists she represents the quintessential prodigal daughter who has escaped the world of male oppression and come to the safe haven of feminist knowledge.

Linda Lovelace's analysis, as well as her experience, is frightening. Without negating or even questioning the pain and physical/psychological coercion imposed on this individual, it is nonetheless valid to note that the hypothesis of absolute control/domination over her is inconsistent with her own successful

departure from the pornography industry and her survival/success as a human being. More importantly, by accepting and promoting a simple causal model of a complex dynamic and embracing explanations grounded in mindless determinacy contingent on the eradication of will/choice; she creates herself as object. For example, Susan Griffin is careful to note that Linda Lovelace was regularly hypnotized (Griffin 1982:113), a potent symbol of the total obliteration of will/humanness/self.

In spite of the claim that women have herstorically been "kept off the record" (Spender, 1982a:14) and that:

Feminism has always taken women's real experience as the basis for theory, and a perspective on pornography should not be any different.

Pornography and the Sex Crisis  
Susan Griffin (1989:21)

In fact while feminist scholarship clearly acknowledges that dominant (male) conceptualizations of reality are reaffirmed unless the experience of women are incorporated into feminist and malestream analysis, with the notable exceptions of Good Girls, Bad Girls (Bell, 1987) and Sex Work (1987), the feminist literature reviewed fails to provide a forum for skin-trade workers' voice. Instead an analysis based on some women's interpretation of other women's experience, with at best token reference to Linda Lovelace is presented as complete. Susan Cole, who "learnt a lot from reading Ordeal" (Cole, 1987b:157), cites no other participants in her 1989 text, Pornography and the Sex Crisis. The understanding generated through lived reality is effectively negated, and a

white, middle class 'essential woman' constructed. Feminist analysis may have, as Susan Cole (1989) claims, dislodged pornography from the incestuous male domain of the moralist, the pornographer and the customer who previously established the parameters of the debate (Cole, 1989:17). However this has been done without incorporating or even acknowledging the voice/experience of skin-trade workers.

Feminist authors are adamant that skin-trade workers are genuine women (Cole, 1989:8). However with the notable exceptions of Good Girls/Bad Girls (1987) and Sex Work (1987), none of the texts reviewed realized in concrete terms the implications of this rhetorical 'politically correct' statement. Notably absent in Susan Cole's 1989 text is any reference to the 1985 Toronto conference "Challenging our Image - The Politics of Pornography and Prostitution". During this forum for the exchange of ideas between feminists and sex-trade workers and skin-trade workers a participant potently identified this hypocrisy when she criticized Cole, as an individual and as a 'class' representative:

...you're not giving legitimacy to our story of how we're being hurt and who is hurting us. You - with your unwillingness to contact us - you're hurting us....You sit on your little pedestal....you don't like my definition of who's doing it, and so you don't want to hear my story.

Good Girls, Bad Girls  
Participant 2 (1987:138)

This denial of voice reproduces, reinforces and therefore legitimates the understanding of (some) women as body/object. Skin-trade workers are denied a forum in the feminist discourse,

presumably because they lack the consciousness necessary to contribute to the construction of knowledge. In pornography, the model is body/object/sex; in the feminist literature reviewed she is not human but a mindless, two dimensional body/object/symbol, representing all women's real or potential degradation, and lack of self. She is both an instrument and a method of male domination and female subjugation.

The lives of 'deviant' skin-trade workers, many of whom are lower class sisters, are appropriated and reproduced in political rhetoric. She is the object that instills fear in women - it could happen to you or your daughter or your sister, and her shame becomes everywoman's (Griffin, 1981:111). Presented as indicative of female solidarity, this practice is in fact blatantly exploitative - ultimately this feminist perspective is perhaps more alienating, offensive and damaging than the lived reality of the skin trade.

Catherine MacKinnon states that:

It is impossible for Linda [Lovelace] to exist as who she is, having been through what she has been through. Usually what happened to Linda would make it impossible for you ever to hear from her. Once these things happen, the women are silenced forever, so it is impossible to be both a victim and a survivor.

Feminism Unmodified  
MacKinnon (1987:131)

Implied, but not explicitly stated, in the above quote is that women, in their post-utility stage, having outlived their pornographic usefulness, are discarded once their 'currency' is eroded they have no voice. Through the effective linguistic use of

agentless passive motivators, MacKinnon constructs a frightening and what I consider to be a misleading image, while simultaneously obscuring agency. Articulating how and by whom the women are silenced, would necessitate identifying the role of the creators of feminist discourse/knowledge, an insight which clearly contravenes MacKinnon's argument. To acknowledge that feminists are one of the instruments of silencing would expose an inconsistency between the philosophy and realization of feminist theory.

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

The feminist pornography literature reviewed is grounded in patriarchal conceptual frameworks. The reliance on mainstream names and constructs, that are presented as fact rather than opinion confirms them as objective 'truth' and precludes the expression of the meaning and essence of women's experience. Female sexual degradation is accepted and reproduced in the understanding that skin-trade workers are debased and dehumanized by their work, since "...after her first birth as a human being... [she experiences a second birth and] she becomes a humiliated creature" (emphasis mine) (Griffin, 1982:112).

The experience of degradation is real, however what is experienced as degrading is determined by the definition and understanding ascribed by the observers and participants of social action in reference to their socially defined morality. Contrary to what is implied in the dominant discourses, nothing is inherently degrading.

The feminist literature reviewed presumes that pornography objectifies women. The depictions of pornographic material and the dynamic by which ownership of the model's image is assumed by the consumer of a published pornograph (see for example Cole 1989) are understood to culminate in the defining/portraying of women as sexual entities objects of desire who also desire. Since the individual woman's desire is unrelated to her-self, she becomes the projection of male desire (Finn, 1985:85). In the dominant discourse on pornography the objectification of women is not solely located in this genre. Pornography can perhaps be distinguished from other cultural production by the explicitness of the sex. Apparently "sex is different" (Cole, 1987:49). By focusing on pornography as the cultural source of female subjugation, malestream social constructs are not transcended and attention is diverted from the many prevalent but insidious channels by which women are defined as object.

#### DICHOTOMIZED THOUGHT

It appears as if some feminists are willing to sacrifice the voice/experience of their 'lost' sisters to the altar of moral judgement, for the greater good of womankind. The implicit acceptance of androcentric, middle-class morality transforms an oppressive social construct into 'knowledge' and results in the presentation of moral majority arguments in the guise of radical thought.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that in a considerable body of feminist scholarship dichotomized thought is identified as a world view conducive to the definition of woman as object, and to the denial of woman as the subject of discourse. These dimensions, of whore/madonna, male/female, mind/body, culture/nature and objectivity/subjectivity will guide the discussion on the feminist pornography literature.

In the feminist literature reviewed the pornographer's camera creates the woman as an object, removing the soul/humanity/subjectivity of the model. As a result the model "is not someone we might know" (Griffin, 1981:36). Of course, "we do not even enter those places where it [pornography] is sold" (Griffin, 1981:3) and "self-respecting women do not want to [even] see pornographic magazines" (Bat Ada quoted in Lederer, 1982:116). Open to speculation is what moral and socio-economic class, 'we', as the recipients of feminist scholarship, are presumed to belong. Regardless of the pornographer's actions a division is clearly established in the feminist discourse between women inside and outside the pornography industry, the skin-trade worker is clearly 'other'.

Pornography arguably decontextualizes and dehumanizes male sexuality and defines potentially rich emotional experiences as purely physical/orgasmic. In addition the prevalence of the well endowed, ever-ready stud - an ideal gender type - in pornography may negatively impact the consumer's self-image. The feminist discourse by either ignoring or downplaying the relevance of such

issues, suggests that men are not constrained by their bodies. If individual and joint male identities are not undermined through visual pornographic depictions, then men are mind, and unlike, woman, capable of transcending the physical sphere of pornography.

Similarly, Susan Griffin's understands Marilyn Monroe to be a celluloid creation, the product of male fantasies (Griffin, 1981:216). This definition denies her talent and her personhood and thereby reaffirms the definition of Monroe, and symbolically of womankind, as body - sex with no soul. Griffin inadvertently reproduces the image of woman/body.

The dominant ideology celebrates sex differences which are conceptualized in patriarchal thought as a 'logical' manner of describing/dividing the social world. Accordingly the "possession of a penis, is patriarchy's only excuse; the sign and symptom of man's domination over women" (Finn, 1985:90). Some of the feminist literature on pornography may inadvertently replicate this understanding by constructing the 'mark' of men - the penis - as the symbol of male violence "a sabre penetrating a vagina is a weapon....but so is the penis for which it substitutes" (Dworkin, 1979:25). This analogy, while inconsistent with biological reality (Assiter, 1989:65), is highly functional to the legitimacy of some feminist discourses. For violence to be conceptualized as an intergender phenomenon, men must be marked through the highlighting of biological differences. Ultimately the feminist pornography discourse legitimates and utilizes the male/female dichotomy symbolised by the penis.

Socialization processes and the patriarchal social context are acknowledged and explained in the feminist discourse as a function of biological and social determinism. This reaffirms the notion of the essential male and the essential female. A man has self, a woman, by contrast is "the object, [who] goes out into the world formed as men have formed her to be used as men use her" (Dworkin, 1979:111). Such statements suggest that the two genders constitute two separate heterogeneous entities, and denies the humanness, diversity, autonomy, self-determinacy and potential for growth of men and women.

Through the unqualified use of value-laden descriptors, men are constructed in the feminist literature reviewed as 'bad'-determined and constrained by their 'natural' desire and need for violence, power and specific sexual expression:

Men, from the best to the worst, believe what pornography says about women.

Pornography, Men Possessing Women  
Dworkin (1979:167).

Real men do need pornography, unfortunately; just as patriarchy needs real men.

Pornographic Eye/I  
Finn (1985:92)

In the feminist discourses reviewed all men, more or less overtly, employ linguistic, monetary, physical, and/or psychological violence. "Men are distinguished from women by their commitment to do violence rather than be victimized by it" (Dworkin, 1979:53). Since Dworkin is clearly functioning within a dichotomized understanding of reality, consistency would dictate that if men are inherently 'bad' - violent victimizers, then women

must be 'good' -non-violent victims. Dworkin exemplifies this when she refutes the hypothesis of Robert Buffault, that female, but not male animals are naturally sexually sadistic (Dworkin, 1979:134), shortly thereafter the mirror image of this dichotomy is reproduced without any apparent conscious irony, in the discussion on "the sexual sadism of men" (Dworkin, 1979:136).

The feminist pornography literature reviewed employs epistemological frameworks, refining and modifying the meanings but not the concepts encoded. The strategy of defining women as the embodiment of all that is good in humanity, and projecting all maliciousness onto men, dictates that selfhood is assumed through the self-denial and the rejection of women's complexity and selves. For example, Dworkin suggests that a false accusation of rape must be redefined (excused?) in the broader context and extent of female victimization (Dworkin, 1979:188).

The dependency on essentialism is methodologically and theoretically invalid and the result endangers the acknowledgement and acceptance of humanness. If pornography is seen to reflect everywoman's real or potential experience, and if pornography involves sexual/social debasement, then a framework has been established which justifies essentialism, renders class and race divisions irrelevant, and obscures the personal/political position and mandate of the discourse creators.

The contention, bordering on conspiracy theory, that magazines such as Playboy have a "hidden agenda" to condition men, "through slick tricks and advertising techniques" to perceive/define women

as sexual objects, to break down taboos (Bat-Ada quoted in Lederer, 1982:112-115), and to encourage/teach violence against women, is problematic. A related recurring theme, reminiscent of the discredited cannabis to heroin argument of the 1960's, is that increasingly extreme depictions are required to satisfy the consumer of pornography:

Saturation with straightforward female sexual female stimulus leads slowly but inevitably to the need for, and acceptance of such things as child molestation, incest and sexual violence. (emphasis mine)

Playboy Isn't Playing  
Judith Bat-Ada in Lederer (1982:112)

To understand the impact of pornography in this manner decontextualizes pornography, denying the humanness of the consumer and the extent to which the impact of pornography on behaviour is grounded in the interpretation of the recipient. Man/nature is not presented as an agent, but as a pawn of culture. It could be argued that some of the feminist literature on pornography attempts to realize transcendence by creating man as an object in relation to which woman is subject. This is a problematic strategy grounded on an oppressive world view which undermines and precludes human transcendence.

It is generally acknowledged that a social process must occur to transform a boy, nurtured by a woman, into an adult male who objectifies women, including the object/mother with whom the male child has his first "parasitic relationship" (Dworkin, 1979:105). One perspective may be formulated utilizing Susan Griffin's thesis which centres on the understanding of pornography as the cultural

expression of man's desire to dominate nature. Symbolically, that what is feared and perceived as threatening - woman/nature - can be repressed within the pseudo-reality of pornography (Griffin 1981:145). Similarly Susan Lurie's (1982) adaption of psychoanalytic theory suggests that men fear the power, ability to castrate and sexual invulnerability of the mother, and later mother replacements (lovers). Lurie suggests pornography plays on this fear by defining the woman as disempowered, vulnerable and controlled (Lurie, 1982:165).

Without examining the validity of these hypotheses, such an understanding of pornography would suggest that the (natural?) anxiety men experience in relation to women is exploited by the pornography industry for economic gain. That this is not considered may reflect the fact that such awareness would require acknowledging the oppression inherent to the capitalist social order and the fact that poverty and economic exploitation extends beyond the rhetorical 'feminization of poverty'.

The presentation of social explanations is not inconsistent with the predominant image of men in the feminist pornography literature reviewed, men are constructed as impulsive, sexual beings, motivated and defined by nature and disposing of a "deep rooted savagery" (Eworkin, quoted in Chester, 1982:151). Evolutionary, biological and/or social explanations are employed to account for men's greater natural responsivity to sexual stimuli (Assiter, 1989:29).

The culture/nature dichotomy is reproduced in reverse, and social processes are constructed as a function of the natural, and therefore inescapable, male desire for power. If pornography and female objectification are functions of natural, and virtually inevitable, processes then attempting transcendence is a futile exercise. Simultaneously, the focus on female sexuality in the feminist pornography literature reviewed does not contravene malestream thought and the association of women with nature/sex.

Patricia Hughes's graphic description of oral sex as the practice by which "Women's mouths are put to the service of men to prevent our assertion of our own integrity and self-definition of our sexuality" (Hughes, 1985:103) is not value neutral. Gender relations in the feminist literature reviewed are frequently constructed as inherently negative and oppressive, thereby denying the possibility of positive interaction despite the assertion that it is not sex but the hierarchical relations enacted through the depiction of sex that are problematic. More importantly the implicit heterophobia and veiled advocacy of homosexuality politicizes women's sexual orientation and reaffirms the validity of defining women in relation to their sexuality and sexual behaviour. Therefore while the feminist discourse denies malestream content, the form (sex) is retained while the drive is redirected.

There is an emerging recognition of the need to include the reality of women of colour and the social expressions of racism in pornography into the feminist analysis (see for example Bell, 1987). However, like the incorporating of marginalized women's

voice, this remains largely at the level of rhetoric. It is not viable to examine the dynamic of women's multiple oppression by abstracting this from the experience of marginalization: economically and racially subjugated men are also arguably sexually and physically objectified and defined as less than fully human in the dominant discourses. This common experience, when redefined as a further source of female objectification, marginalizes the reality of racially oppressed women:

The racially degraded male collaborates in the degradation of women - all women - because he is offered something important for his complicity: an acknowledgement of a sexuality of which the racially superior male is envious....the racially degraded male is mesmerized by the myth of his own masculinity....he will avenge himself on the women of the racially superior group.

Pornography - Men Processing Women  
Dworkin (1979:157)

Phyllis Chesler offers a similar explanation of class differences, arguing that the possession of sexual property, and the superiority of all men to all women in patriarchy, effectively reduces male rivalry (Chesler, 1982:151).

Many feminist scholars imply a similarity between women's oppression in and through pornography and the historic experience of Jewish peoples in Nazi Germany and Black people in the North American institution of slavery. Dworkin, discussing a photo spread of an "olive skinned model" surrounded by laser lights featured in German Playboy suggests "...the laser beams promise burning. The taste of some Germans has indeed run to the technological: ovens in which masses of Jews were exterminated" (Dworkin, 1979:142), the

subsequent equating of all women's experience as reproduced in pornography and that of the female concentration camp inmate decontextualizes, denies the reality/voice, exploits the pain and in fact creates victim/symbols/objects of the Jewish peoples tortured and murdered during the holocaust.

Dworkin also draws the analogy between the Black slave's need to personify the happy, slow and stupid Black expected by their 'owners', and women's behaviour in patriarchy (Dworkin, 1979:203). These powerful analogies are inconsistent with the reality of the power dynamics which defined the experiences of these populations. There is a substantive difference between the experience of actual physical ownership and the ideological and subtle appropriation of women in western capitalist patriarchy. The presentation obscures the differences among women, women's complicity in oppression and the privileged position of the discourse creators. To deny another's experience/trauma in order to dramatise women's own, is to adopt and utilize the oppressive strategies of the patriarchal social order, thereby dehumanizing and undermining women's real and potential self.

Dworkin, at her misandristic best theorizes that Jewish and Black men are complicate, after the fact, "[A]venging-the-reclamation of masculinity is evident among Jewish and Black males...the Nazis set a new standard of masculinity" (Dworkin, 1980:145).

### AGENCY

Pornography is characterized in the feminist literature reviewed as the portrayal of women without choice/autonomy/subjectivity by women (models) without choice/autonomy/subjectivity. The 'truth' of the latter point requires the denial/silencing of divergent knowledge already detailed, and the naming/defining the dynamic of participation in the skin-trade in a manner that denies agency and autonomy.

In the feminist pornography literature reviewed the skin-trade worker is constructed as victim:

When people look at women in pornography, they often do not see victims subordinated by the practice. They see pornography's collaborators....This is part of a syndrome called blaming the victim.

Pornography and the Sex Crisis  
Susan Cole (1989,28)

For the skin-trade worker, whose own understanding may more closely resemble autonomous agency, the imposed definition as victim, is inaccurate and insulting:

So when they [feminist theorists and ideologues] slide into their 'Oh, they're all victims and we must save them!' trip, it supports the continued stigmatizing because it's patronizing and condescending.

Good Girls, Bad Girls  
Margo St. James (1987:86)

Eileen Manion notes that, ironically, if women achieve control of their body, then women could rent/sell their body, that is participate as autonomous agents in pornography (Manion, 1985:73).

In order to maintain consistency the female skin-trade worker

must be constructed as victim: victimization symbolically represents the epitome of disempowerment. The models are named victims of the physical/ psychological coercion of individual or collective men, of sexual assault, of incest, of self-hatred, of poor economic opportunities or of a social order that defines them as physical entities. A skin-trade worker who does not identify herself in this manner is twice a victim, in this case of false consciousness. While some or all of these elements may be important, by constructing a causal linear understanding of women's involvement in skin-trade work, and failing to explore the possibility that this line of action may be purposeful and strategic choice, the women are denied the possibility of self-determinacy. The offering of excuses to exonerate women further reinforces the perception that pornography and participation in the industry is inherently socially and personally disruptive.

The understanding of pornography as an exploitative practice and presentation dominates malestream and feminist discourse. The feminist literature reviewed defines exploitation in a gender specific manner located in patriarchy. Griffin modifies a traditional cliché and states that skin-trade workers are "bought, literally for sale" (Griffin, 1980:111), this obscures the commonality of workers in a capitalist economic order which is characterised by the selling, or more accurately the renting, of labour by men and women. Skin-trade work is different by moralistic criteria: flaunting the image of virtuous womanhood, she employs her body in a manner socially constructed as sexual. This

understanding fails to incorporate the exploitation of the skin-trade worker as a worker, sharing many of the dynamics characteristic of semi-skilled (read lower-class) employment. Skin-trade workers themselves more readily locate their exploitation in the broader social structure and in an ideology that justifies discriminatory practices on the basis of an individual's involvement in the skin-trade (Arrington, 1987:116).

By implication, though presumably not by design, the mystifying of the woman's status as worker individualizes her loss of autonomy, maintains the ideological assumption that only work associated with sex is degrading (Reiman, 1979:55), affirms the definition of woman as body/object, and obscures the complicity of discourse creators as members of the dominant socio-economic strata. When exploring skin trade workers' exploitation it is worth reflecting that:

At a place like York University....[lecturers] are making fat incomes and have prestige out of talking and lecturing on these topics are accomplices in the marginalization, in the devaluation, of sexuality, ...of prostitutes and sex trade workers.

Good Girls, Bad Girls  
Participant 4 (1987:117)

#### KNOWLEDGE

Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice.

Theory and Practice  
Robin Morgan (1982:131)

In the feminist literature reviewed, pornography is assumed to be a negative entity, consistent with dominant norms and values,

and a symptom and cause of misogyny: it is instrumental in the maintenance/promotion of the hierarchical gender relations characteristic of patriarchy. The imposition of a repressive reality on the lives of individual and collective women, (MacKinnon, 1987:149) the behaviour encouraged through pornography is consistent with the social order generally and institutions that constitute it. Without disputing this perspective, it is valid to examine how this understanding is constructed and the implication of this world view.

The harm inherent to pornography stated in an intellectually pretentious manner - something we, as women 'know', or should know, and therefore beyond the need for validation - implies that an abstract unquestionable reality and a universal female understanding exist. These assumptions are problematic given intragender diversity and the impossibility of assessing 'truth' in a social/academic context of androcentric knowledge.

The Fraser Report, on prostitution and pornography, concluded that the flaws in the social science research on the effects of pornography precluded conclusions at this time (Canada, 1985:99). Some feminist scholars, like right-wing social commentators 'prove' the social destruction by pornography through reference to either to anecdotal material - convicted rapists or wife beaters who consume(d) pornography - or to laboratory experiments. In both instances, there is considerable data which are either ignored or summarily dismissed as reflections of the patriarchal social order

which determines the theoretical framework, methodology and conclusions (see for example Russell, 1982:216).

It is generally recognized that the findings of laboratory experiments must be interpreted with caution, given that an artificial setting can not replicate the 'real life' environment or experience during or after pornography consumption, nor can a sample population reproduce the experience or understanding of the consumers (Fisher, 1986:169). Feminist reference to experimental design research is problematic on a fundamental philosophical level for some feminist theory. It legitimates and validates the use of science, which by nature abstracts, dehumanizes and decontextualizes - the transforming of human beings into an object of analysis is inconsistent with the holistic world view advocated by feminists (see for example Finn, 1982c:40).

#### LANGUAGE

Language, how meanings and concepts are encoded, is instrumental in assuring the recipient interprets discourse in a manner consistent with the conceptualizations of the discourse creators. The strategic deployment of syntax has been noted throughout this chapter, several other dimensions will be developed individually.

The failure of androcentric language to capture women's experience has motivated feminists to appropriate the prerogative to name. This can only be an effective tool in the development of human epistemologies if all women's reality is expressed. It is

counterproductive if androcentric, conceptual frameworks, definitions and dichotomous thought are reproduced in an equally biased gynocentric language. To illustrate, "Malecest" (Lederer, 1982:113) renders the concept of incest gender specific, without necessarily accurately encoding the truth of the sexual violation of children. More importantly it reinforces the dominant polarity of woman as asexual/good, man as sexual/bad. Similarity when Catherine MacKinnon informs us that "Linda [Lovelace] was "pornographed" (MacKinnon, 1987:128), she names the model an entity, without voice or autonomy - that is an object onto which pornography is imposed. Griffin (1981) judges skin-trade workers to be unreliable sources when she states that a woman "claims [that] she is not ashamed of her work [in pornography]" (emphasis mine) (Griffin, 1981:115).

The naming of adults 'girl' and 'boy', is generally understood as minimizing, implying the subject is less than a fully human actress. The creators of the feminist discourses reviewed discuss the depictions, experience, social and personal implications of pornography involving women and children as almost interchangeable dynamics. This linguistic strategy assures that our abhorrence of paedophilia is transferred onto the pornographic depiction of adult women. Although the principles of domination and subordination may be consistent across a variety of situations (Hughes, 1985:121), by suggesting women share the vulnerability, naivety, and the need of protection of children in western societies, women are denied the

status of adults. The traditional paternalistic response to female sexuality is thus reinforced.

The use of the archetypical images is also prevalent in the pornography literature reviewed. For example 'Holocaust' is a powerful word, synonymous with the worst in humanity. It almost spontaneously invokes distressing and frightening visual images and emotional responses. Reference to neo-nazism (Cole, 1989:8), Hitler (Griffin, 1981:169) and Mein Kampf (Steinem quoted in Lederer, 1982:112) accesses the power of the image without the need to justify or develop an analogy. Whether implicit or explicit, the equation of the possible pain, loss of autonomy, and objectification through pornographic practices to the atrocities committed in Nazi Germany is exploitative.

In the literature reviewed pornography is often referred to as hate literature/propaganda with which it shares characteristics including the use of stereotypes, repetition, the selective representation of facts, and scapegoating (see for example Clark, 1983). The issue is perhaps not whether or not pornography is or could be propaganda, but rather that this powerful term invokes images that are more intense and systematic than the reality of the industry, and the underlying classist, elitist assumptions: "...[pornography is] simplified, easily assimilated opinions masked as truth aimed at the least intelligent segment of a population" (emphasis mine) (LaBelle, 1982:169). The defining of propaganda as male also obscures this potential in the female or feminist discourse.

### CONCLUSION

There have been a number of responses, from tolerance to bombing to censorship, advocated by feminists to counteract pornography. Increasingly prevalent and supported by a number of theorists is a strategy developed by MacKinnon and Dworkin. It entails establishing the right of women victimized as a consequence of pornography to initiate civil action against pornographers. This strategy is consistent with the patriarchal tradition of individualizing collective social problems. Further the result of this response, which promotes an image of all women as victims in need of protection is empowering of the patriarchal state and legal system which has herstorically responded in a paternalistic manner to female sexuality. Carol Smart (1989) suggests that the law is not a benevolent instrument. She notes that through the use of the law, the legal system is legitimated and the power of law increased (Smart, 1989:13).

In the feminist literature reviewed on pornography, there are no human actors, no people who interact with the social world, determined by, but also determiners of their socio-sexual reality. In place of a dialectic, the dialogue is peopled with papier-mache characters - men driven to pornography/violence/rape by their nature; sex-trade workers driven by economic/sexual violence; and 'good' women determined by patriarchal ideology. Constructing men and women as objects, and structuring the discussion within the

conceptual frameworks and dichotomous understanding of malestream thought, renders women and men, at best, the subjects of an oppressive discourse - that is objects.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

#### PROSTITUTION

In the previous chapter we examined the possibility that an unintended consequence of the feminist discourse on pornography is that the malestream construction of woman as object is reproduced in some of the feminist literature. In this chapter a similar analysis will be presented of some of the feminist literature on prostitution. The literature reviewed was sampled according to the methods detailed in chapter two, and like the pornography literature can broadly be classified as radical feminist scholarship.

Prostitution rhetorically referred to as the 'world's oldest profession' continues to elicit diverse social responses. The phenomenon is simultaneously fostered and condemned (Boyd, 1987:139); it is more or less accepted as a 'necessary evil' until such time as it is seen to interfere with the 'rights', lives, or property values of the 'law abiding citizenry'. The prostitute herself is, however, readily denounced. Her deviation from the sanctioned socio-sexual female role makes her the quintessential female deviant, the epitome of 'lost' womanhood. This ambivalence, though mystified by the focus on the patriarchal social order, is reproduced in some feminist literature. In feminist, like malestream scholarship, the prostitute is the object of research

and theory, not the subject whose understanding is incorporated into the analysis.

There is a long tradition of prostitution and prostitutes being constructed as a 'social problem' - the appropriate subject of female reformers' efforts. In the 'progressive era', prostitution was conceptualized as a social evil, although increasingly prostitutes themselves came to be defined as victims - of social/personal inadequacies, immorality, male lust and the limited economic opportunities for working women. The contradictory nature of these 'causes' reflects the ambivalence of the reformers who, as products and representatives of the middle classes and the dominant ideology, had a vested interest in confirming women's moral superiority and retaining their sphere of influence as the guardians of social values. This incongruence resulted in paternalistic measures of protection/oppression which tried to "'save' prostitutes by destroying their means of support and running them out of town" (Rosen, 1982:102).

A review of the relevant literature suggests that the discourse some of contemporary feminist activists, like that of 19th century reformers, is characterized by:

1. Ambivalence towards prostitute women and denunciation of the phenomenon of prostitution.
2. The promoting of patronizing and oppressive strategies of rescue.

3. Assumptions grounded in the dominant ideology and the class biases of the discourse creators.

The unarticulated biases and assumptions of this modern discourse make it susceptible to appropriation and transformation by the 'new right' who are "only too delighted to turn feminist protest into a politics of repression" (Walkowitz 1984:434).

In this chapter on the reproduction of woman as object/victim in the feminist discourse, the term prostitute will be used interchangeably with the term sex-trade worker and will be defined as a person engaged in the exchange of a direct, interactive activity which is understood by at least one of the participants as sexual, for immediate monetary or other substantive compensation. This definition excludes socially accepted gender relations, and includes activities inconsistent with sexuality constructed as normative in the dominant discourse. Although this definition is not gender specific unless indicated otherwise, the service providers are understood in this paper to be female, and the customers male.

In spite of the articulated desire to accept all female social actors as women and to afford them a voice, the prostitution literature reviewed reflects the fundamental failure of feminist praxis to come to terms with the often conflicting personal/political mandates of female solidarity, socialized morality, gender equality, social values and the reality of female diversity. It is interesting that there were only a limited number

of submissions received by the Report of the Special Committee on Prostitution and Pornography (The Fraser Report) from women's groups on prostitution. The reason appears to be that.

[T]hey had been so involved in researching and campaigning against pornography that they simply did not have the time or the resources to prepare an adequate brief on Prostitution.

The Fraser Report.  
Canada 1985:345

#### PORNOGRAPHY/PROSTITUTION

In the feminist discourses reviewed, prostitution and pornography are conceptualized as philosophically and materially interrelated phenomenon: pornography is the depiction of commodified sex that is realized in prostitution. In contrast to the distinctions between themselves and their work made by women in the trades (see for example Cooke, 1987:94), the individuals and their experiences are presented in much of the literature as identical or virtually interchangeable. An examination of the actual work suggests that the similarity resides not in the actual labour but in the social construction of the work, the association with sex, and the labels applied to the workers.

"The contemporary feminist position on prostitution [is] expressed by the feminist anti-pornography campaign" (Nestle, 1987:132). The feminist prostitution literature reviewed is shaped by, but not confined to, the pornography discourse developed in the previous chapter. The humanness of the prostitute, who is a real woman who engages in real social interactions (including sex) precludes her total transformation into the two-dimensional

symbol/object of the pornograph. Though prostitution is an issue on the feminist agenda, feminist literature on this topic is sparse, diverse and focused on the worker. The conclusions are more tentative than those which emerge from an analysis of the pornography scholarship. The feminist prostitution literature reviewed is less clearly informed by a specific orientation than is the case in pornography, however this discourse is also firmly located in the cultural feminist framework.

At present, through prostitution rights organizations, publications and individual testimony there exists a critical mass of proclamations by prostitutes available in the public forum. The existence of this material is particularly striking in relation to the marked silence of women in the skin-trades. This contrast is realized in the content of Sex Work (1987), an anthology of writings by women in the 'sex industry' (skin-trade and sex-trade workers), which contains just one submission from a pornography worker, four from nude dancers, but more than forty first-person accounts by women in the sex-trades as defined in the previous chapter.

#### WOMEN'S VOICES

Prostitutes are an embarrassment to feminists because they're glaringly saying 'No, you're wrong. My experience and my life don't coalesce with yours.'

Good Girls, Bad Girls  
CORP (1987:215)

The ideology of the 'prostitution subculture' is a grounded world view, a conceptualization of reality which is perhaps more

consistent with the experience of the prostitute and her clients than the dominant ideology. It has previously been noted that when personal understanding of experience cannot be accommodated in dominant conceptual frameworks, either the experience, understanding or personal identity must be reconsidered and transformed to retain consistency or an alternate explanation that is true to lived reality must be constructed.

The prostitute, is a public persona she assumes a "master status" (Lemert, 1982): an identity, which as a social and self-definition tends to override other roles. Arguably it as a consequence of stigma, the impossibility of self-delusion, and their working conditions (particularly of street workers), that prostitutes interact and identify with one another more than skin-trade workers. Contrary to malestream and feminist understandings of prostitution as characterized by "mistrust, pretence and deception" (Enloe, 1983:41) there has herstorically been a sense of community and support (Rosen, 1982:105). This association facilitates the communal generation and validation of an alternate consciousness and the construction of personal/political understanding of one's situation. Transformed into knowledge, it becomes a personal and political resource.

There is, of course, not a universal monolithic 'truth' expressed by prostitutes. The phenomenon is characterized by diversity - some women's experience is either captured by the feminist or malestream discourse, while others requires alternate frameworks. Though prostitutes are aware, and respond to, the

dominant discourse, some sex workers have begun to demand the right to construct their private and public identity. By articulating this knowledge, challenging their containment in the private and sex arena, they have affirmed their public voice (Rowbotham, 1989:262).

Feminist philosophy dictates that the experience and understandings of women are valued sources of information. The concrete fact that prostitutes, unlike skin-trade workers have established a public voice, dictates that the dynamic of 'silencing' differs from that developed in the previous chapter. Whereas in the feminist literature reviewed the skin-trade worker is effectively kept 'off the record' (Spender, 1982a:14), and can therefore be constructed as, a symbolic and literal, victim, in the feminist discourse on prostitution the workers are more actively constructed as discredited object/other. Despite the availability of autobiographical accounts, most are ignored or, perhaps worse, re-constructed. Sex trade workers whose articulation departs from the correct feminist perspective are denied legitimacy. The creators of the feminist literature reviewed implicitly deny the correctness of some women (see for example Price, 1989). They do this by referencing only those first-person accounts that replicate the radical feminist understanding, and by not incorporating the voices of women whose conceptualization differs from their own in spite of the avowed understanding of the need "not to override or dismiss any woman's voice" (Price, 1989:59).

The prostitute's alternate perspective is explicitly denied when her discourse is defined as reflecting a failure to recognize her own oppression. In many feminist discourses, prostitution is constructed as an phenomenon which is oppressive/degrading to the prostitutes and 'other women' as it "serves as a guerilla training camp and rehabilitative centre for sex terrorists" (Jeffreys, 1985:68). Prostitute women who support the institution can therefore be defined as complicit in the subordination of all womankind, agents of patriarchy who lack awareness and consciousness and therefore erroneously assume themselves to be self determined actors. The act of re-interpreting the words of prostitutes constitutes an appropriation of their experience, delegitimizes their reality and implicitly defines them as objects of the prostitution discourse. In effect, the sex-trade worker's understanding and identity are not only dismissed but, are also appropriated as proof of her subjugation.

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

The feminist discourse on prostitution reviewed for this paper is contained and defined by conceptual constructs of reality and social interaction, grounded in the dominant ideology. Kathleen Barry contends that prostitutes do not name their reality because they lack the framework through which to make sense of their own victimization (Barry, 1979:118). Given that her text explicitly discredits the sense that sex workers make of their own experience, she actually advocates understanding of prostitute women from an

androcentric perspective. By defining the conceptual frameworks in this manner she effectively mystifies the reactionary nature of the feminist vision.

To construct the prostitute as victim, "coerced by the circumstances of her life" (Wynter, 1987:267), is wholly consistent with the malestream vision of woman as passive beings. The prostitute woman who consciously identifies herself as the agent of her own sexuality and exploiter of constructed morality, by contrast challenges the limitations of dominant conceptual frameworks and transcends the imposed boundaries when she demands:

What is so terrible about fucking for a living? ....I like it, I can live out my fantasies.

Good Girls, Bad Girls  
Participant 1 (1987:48)

For prostitution to symbolize the essence of patriarchal domination the prostitute's gender relations must epitomize control of women by men. The feelings of empowerment experienced by prostitute women (St. James, 1989:82) in their interaction with men are therefore dismissed as a delusion, one that evaporates with the first violent encounter which demonstrates the true distribution of power (Price, 1989:61). The point of departure from this feminist understanding is located within androcentric thought which equate power with physical domination, an understanding that is instrumental in female subjugation.

A former prostitute and pornography worker notes "it's not the act that makes it bad; the people were clean and respectful. It's the stigma that made it bad" (Kaiser, 1987:104). That prostitute

women are labelled by society and consequently ostracized from 'other women' is presented in the feminist discourse as an inevitable 'fact' which invalidates the portrayal of prostitution as a job (see for example Jeffreys, 1985:64). This circular argument employs, and therefore legitimates, an arbitrary divisionary process and obscures the agency of non-prostitute women.

In both feminist and malestream thought, the engaging in sex for reasons other than procreation or pleasure is named immoral, and is assumed to impact negatively on one's self concept. It thereby reduces the woman to the status of an object (Jeffreys, 1985:64). To define prostitutes as degraded by the nature of their work necessitates the acceptance of the moralistic concepts and judgements encoded in 'degradation'. Underlying this understanding is the assumption that sex and morality are normative, natural, pure and therefore corruptible dynamics rather than social constructs. The exchange of anonymous sex for financial compensation is problematic only if we presume cultural definitions of the appropriate context for sexual relations, and construct sex as fundamentally different - compartmentalized and divorced - from other social and financial interactions.

The dichotomies including male/female, whore/madonna, nature/culture, mind/body and objectivity/subjectivity which were developed in the first chapter will structure the discussion of the prostitution literature.

In the feminist literature reviewed, the phenomenon of prostitution creates a class of social outcasts for all men to "abuse and degrade" (O'Hara, 1985:72;. By accepting the inherent degradation of prostitute woman, the discourse legitimates the good girl/bad girl dichotomy that divides/defines women on the basis of their sexual behaviour.

The discounting of the self-interpretation of prostitutes by feminists reaffirms their status as other: they are not credible witnesses, but whores, as distinguished from feminists whose understanding is credible. In the feminist literature reviewed the stratification of women - the whore/madonna dichotomy - has not been transcended but merely renamed healthy/sick, honest/devious (Willis, 1983:464).

According to Kathlene Barry:

Accepting the perception of others is taking the path of least resistance...Those that are not broken either by seasoning or earlier childhood abuse, will be able to resist the definition..and even recognize their own unnamed victimization. But those that comply with their captor's definition will take on their work in earnest ...When they tell the rest of us that we are straight, judgemental and prudish, they are surviving by defending the definition they have accepted of themselves.

Female Sexual Slavery  
Barry (1979:120)

A woman can therefore reclaim her status as a 'good girl' if she recognizes her victimization. Otherwise the 'whore' designation is valid. 'Whoredom' is conceptually associated with the dark side of female sexuality, personality and character.

Feminists' alliance with the moral majority has herstorically been instrumental in the creation of repressive laws and ideology

that further alienates and defines the prostitute women as other. For example, the lobbying efforts of turn of the century reformers in Britain resulted in protective legislation which not only substantially increased state control of working class women's sexuality, it also marginalized and criminalized the prostitute and denied her the social support she had previously enjoyed so that they "were forced to rely increasingly on pimps for emotional security as well as protection from legal authorities....and prostitution shifted from a female to a male dominated trade" (Walkowitz, 1984:428). The work and life environment of sex workers which is shaped by this societal context is then utilized to legitimate arguments that prostitution is corrupt (CORP, 1987:204).

The understanding prevalent in the feminist literature reviewed is that sexuality is the instrument of social control imposed on women by men, consequently "male sex is motivated not by pleasure...[nor] the enhancement of relations but for the control of, and power over, women" (Jeffreys, 1985:68). In effect, sex is violent and violence is sexual and male.

These conceptualizations replicate the abstraction of sexuality from interpersonal relations which is central to the feminist critique of prostitution. More importantly, man is defined as mind, man/mind dominates his own body transforming it into an weapon by means of which he successfully subjugates woman/body.

In the feminist literature reviewed the male/female dichotomy and the corresponding gender roles are clearly established in a manner which reaffirms, rather than challenges, this largely

arbitrary distinction. Prostitutes are female and customers and pimps are male. The existence of young male prostitutes, and the evidence of both homosexual and heterosexual women purchasing sex (see for example CORP, 1987 and Nestle, 1987), are usually dismissed.

Men are both the suppliers and supporters of a practice graphically named 'slavery', 'rape' or 'abuse' into which women are, at best, coerced. If prostitution mirrors and reinforces hierarchical gender relations, then all men are complicit in the victimization and exploitation of all women inside and outside of prostitution.

The mainstream prostitution discourse has constructed female sexuality as a concern (Wilson, 1984:97): in the feminist discourse this is mirrored rather than transcended. The feminist discourse understands not only women's involvement in prostitution, but also men's patronage of prostitution as problematic. The latter is constructed as a function of the male desire to objectify women, express hatred for women and experience a sense of power over all women through the 'purchase' of one representative member (Jeffreys, 1985:69). This understanding dehumanizes social actors. When sexual and social behaviour is abstracted from its context social interaction and behaviour are reduced to the status of symbols.

In the feminist literature reviewed man is constructed in a manner that is consistent with dichotomous thought. It is notable that in this feminist prostitution literature though man is mind he

is also constructed or assumed to be controlled, almost determined, by sexual impulses:

By anatomical fiat - the inescapable construct of their genital organs - the human male was a natural predator and the human female served as his natural prey.

Against Our Will  
Brownmiller (1975:16)

These feminist discourses assume an essential woman and the cross-cultural existence of prostitution is employed in the feminist discourse to demonstrate the universality of the socio-sexual control of women:

[T]here is nothing unique across cultures in the practices of the enslavement of women except perhaps the diversity of strategies men use to carry them out.

Female Sexual Slavery  
Kathleen Barry (1979:165)

The creating of an ethnocentric 'essential woman' defines all social relations and women's experience of sex, specifically western sexuality.

The assumption of essential gender types grounded in sexual experience is problematic. Rather than provide a forum for transcending differences, social divisions of humanity are reinforced. The acceptance of biological determinism diverts attention from the social institutions and ideology that support gender hierarchy and conflict with feminist ideals. Further, if man is by nature sexually aggressive and motivated by the desire/need for power/violence, then female emancipation may be an unattainable goal.

**AGENCY**

There was always a gun pointed to my head, even when no gun could be seen, there was a gun pointed at my head.

Ordeal

Lovelace (1980:62)

In the feminist literature reviewed the prostitute is the victim of social structures. These include discriminatory laws and their enforcement, the socio-economic system, sex-role stereotypes, and patriarchy. They also include individual men as pimps, customers or observers. Finally there are personal herstories, including incidents of incest and rape, and of course the prostitute's own inability to demystify her situation. These factors are presumed to be the cause of her initial and continued involvement in prostitution, and her subsequent lack of consciousness.

The portrayal of prostitutes in these feminist discourses as without agency is central to the deconstruction of an identity which is grounded in experience and a personal interpretation of reality. This effectively silences and delegitimizes the participant voice. The designation 'victim' effectively discredits the woman's understanding. Constructed as the victims of past and present exploitation, passive 'prostituted' objects are created.

At times the term survival is employed to more accurately capture the essence of women's coping strategies when they are in situations they are powerless to change. This rhetorical redefinition does not empower the women, but it does place their

experience within the framework of the established feminist thought which identifies women as the survivors of abuse.

In the feminist discourses reviewed the correlation between childhood sexual abuse and entry into prostitution is continually cited and 'proven' through highly variable statistics. There is in fact some question as to the actual correlation, and the real nature of the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and prostitution. Maria Arrington discusses "the myth that all sexually abused women in the street are prostitutes because they were sexually abused" (Arrington, 1987:176), and assumes a perspective which locates the relationship in the gender neutral context of the quantity/quality of social services. The contention that prostitution is "taught through parental sexual abuse" (Wynter, 1987:267) establishes a linear model that denies choice or agency, and views women's decisions as a predetermined result of sexual experiences.

The existence and tactics of procurers and their exploitation of prostitute women is cultural knowledge - long assumed to be true by the majority of the Canadian public (Marwick, 1985:11.22).

They sport silk suits while their 'girls' hide bruises

The Ottawa Sun  
October 7, 1990

White slavery [is indicated by] the lurid tales of mystery drugs, hypodermic needles used in theatres and department stores to dope victims.

Chatelain  
April, 1937

In the feminist literature reviewed the existence of the pimp is not only assumed, it is legitimated, and a caricature of this 'folk devil' is evoked to confirm the prostitute's status as manipulated object.

Procuring is a strategy, a tactic for acquiring women and turning them into prostitution (sic); pimping keeps them there. Procuring involves "convincing" a woman to be a prostitute through cunning, fraud, and/or force, taking her against her will or knowledge and putting her into prostitution.....methods involve rape, sodomy, drugging, and starvation.

Female Sexual Slavery  
Barry (1979:86&93)

Concluding that "most prostitution is controlled by pimps" (O'Hara, 1985:70) contradicts the sex worker's contention of self determinacy and that the prevalence and nature of the archetypical pimp who dominates the discourse is not accurate (see Bell, 1989). It also runs against the findings of The Fraser Report that the role of the pimp in entry into prostitution is limited (Sansfacon, 1984:63).

The political advantages of the constructed pimp have philosophical implications which support the dominant ideology. That the pimp discourse is readily assumed knowledge reflects the fact that the pimp-prostitution dynamic is wholly consistent with the ascribed gender characteristics of domination and submission. By explaining female involvement in prostitution by reference to a male agent, the feminist literature reviewed effectively denies the agency of prostitute women and by implication non-prostitute women as well. This position also implies the need to excuse women's

involvement, thereby reaffirming the legitimacy of prostitution's immoral designation.

By supporting legal measures that extend the sphere of moral judgement onto those who associate with prostitutes, the feminist discourses reviewed contribute to the sex worker being considered a social pariah who is legally denied social relations/support and the right to organize and/or communicate with other prostitutes (Scott, 1989:102).

Gender polarity is legitimated - no pure woman, and women are constructed in the dominant ideology as naturally pure - would willingly engage or remain in prostitution unless coerced by a male: if she freely engages in prostitution then she unconscious of her lack of autonomy or else she is genuinely a whore.

The phenomenon of prostitution is defined in the feminist literature reviewed as exploitive and abusive: the source is located in patriarchal gender relations and individual/collective men. Prostitutes themselves locate their oppression in their stigmatization, condemnation and "pimping" by the moral majority, including feminists (CORP, 1987:212). Conceptualizing prostitutes as oppressed and degraded victims, and appropriating their reality and experience and re-forming it to be consistent with the feminist ideology is in fact highly exploitative.

#### KNOWLEDGE

Prostitution is a visible practice, subject to periodic moral condemnation and construction as a social problem. For example, the

majority of the Canadian public, according to a 1984 survey, 'knew' that prostitution is degrading, violent and exploitive (Marwick, 1984:11.11-11.22). In order to construct an alternate feminist discourse on prostitution and prostitutes these assumptions must be transcended, the acceptance of what 'we know' results in a view which has similar consequences to that of malestream discourses.

Marginalized social actors in the sex trades do not have access to the cloak of intellectual and academic legitimacy which affords the feminist and malestream discourses the status of knowledge, and allows constructed truths to be presented as fact. The assertion that "prostitution harms the women who work in it" (Jeffreys, 1985,64) is suspect, particularly when the rather cavalier attitude towards research is revealed in the warning against:

getting bogged down in academic research...[we should] rely more on our common sense, our convictions and what we see in front of us.

Kathleen Barry, quoted in  
The New Feminist of Yin and Yan  
Alice Echols (1983, 447)

#### LANGUAGE

The use of terminology can reveal the subtext and agenda of discourse. In the prostitution literature reviewed language functions to legitimate the feminist construct of this issue without explicitly denouncing other conceptualizations. For example by stating that "men use prostitutes" (emphasis mine) (Jeffreys, 1985:61) Jeffreys constructs the prostitute as an object that is manipulated. Continual reference to former prostitutes as women

"who have escaped" (emphasis mine) (Price, 1989:59) and the idea that "women who leave are hunted down" (Barry, 1979:114) imply an phenomenon so pervasive and controlling that women must covertly flee their captors. While these expressions may capture the experience of some women, the testimony of prostitutes suggest it is less normative than the language implies.

The use of the term slavery to describe prostitution clearly locates prostitution in a system of social relations characterized by the total oppression of one person. A slave, by definition, cannot exercise free will: therefore only a 'brain-washed' slave would fail to recognize her subjugation. Kathleen Barry (1979) develops this thesis most extensively, arguing that it is not a rhetorical device but reflects "an objective social condition of sexual exploitation and violence" (Barry, 1979:40). Defining women's 'slavery' as sexual maintains women within the established identity. It also denies the economic oppression of men and women in a capitalist society, inside and outside of prostitution.

#### CONCLUSION

In the feminist literature reviewed sex is understood to be a unifying principle, which transcends class and race divisions. This understanding falsely assumes that sexuality is not a cultural construct. More importantly, by replicating the dominant discourse on prostitution, some feminists confirm woman as body - the victim, not the agent, of her body/sex.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The preceding review of some of the feminist pornography and prostitution literature demonstrates that feminist scholarship in the field of deviance does not, in fact, always transcend the dominant ideology or the conceptual frameworks it sets out to replace. This paper has built on a tradition of feminist critique. It identifies as problematic the tendency in segments of the feminist literature to construct woman as object rather than realize her as subject.

The creators of these feminist discourses, through their identification as 'other than', construct themselves in relation to others and implicitly legitimate this division. To be woman-centred entails the acceptance of gender dichotomy and of the notion that the concept 'woman' captures sufficient homogeneous reality to be a reasonable category.

The feminist literature reviewed has arguably not been able to realize the abstract theoretical understanding/knowledge of social dynamics articulated by these scholars in the realm of concrete issues such as prostitution and pornography. Consequently the ideology against which feminism identifies itself is in fact at times reproduced. The ideological assumptions, grounded in androcentric conceptual frameworks instrumental in defining woman

as object, are challenged on the level of theory but reproduced in substantive applications. This orientation therefore, implicitly confirms this definition of all women and seriously jeopardizes women's ability to transcend socially constructed reality.

To briefly summarize the argument presented, feminist scholarship clearly articulates a position on dichotomized thought. It is understood as both a symptom of male conceptualizations, and as instrumental in the defining of women as object. Polarities developed in this paper, with reference to feminist scholarship include male/female, whore/madonna, mind/body, nature/culture, objectivity/subjectivity. A number of feminist scholars employ these constructs in their analysis of the institutions and experience of female deviance and thereby implicitly legitimates the division of society on artificial criteria.

In the feminist literature critically reviewed women's lack of autonomy is developed in two ways. Women generally are understood as determined by the patriarchal gender relations which permeate all social reality. More explicitly skin and sex trade workers are constructed as the victim of individual/collective men, their own personal and social herstories, and of the inability to recognize their own oppression. The worker's humanness, autonomy, and subjectivity are deconstructed and she is reconstructed as the symbol of female subjugation - that is as an object.

The feminist discourses on pornography and prostitution reviewed in this thesis have assumed as a point of departure, the ascribed categories of male and female: the corresponding roles

explain/determine and legitimate the skin and sex trades and the feminist discourses on these topics. In the feminist literature reviewed, gender is reproduced as a fundamental difference that determines behaviour, understanding and desire.

The nature/culture, mind/body dichotomies are not surpassed but rather mirrored. Man is body, marked by the penis and determined and controlled by his natural desires - particularly violence and power. These are realized in the practice and institution of heterosexuality. Man is, however, also mind - capable of employing his body as the instrument of female subjugation.

Sex is central to the feminist discourse generally and in the literature on prostitution and pornography specifically. Geraldine Finn (1986), who identifies herself as sex critical, suggests that "sex can not be separated from the social context in which it is produced and realized" (Finn, 1986:12). Kate Ellis (1984) advises that it is necessary to move beyond the understanding of sexuality as objectifying and violent (Ellis, 1984:12). The reviewed literature on the skin and sex trades, by not coming to terms with sexuality, abstracting experience from the social context and deconstruct sexuality, essentially mystifies and empowers interaction grounded in socially defined sexuality.

Skin and sex trade workers personify sex in the malestream and feminist discourses. In the feminist literature critiqued these workers are constructed as the symbols of oppressive ideology and practices of patriarchal social order. For this understanding to be

internally consistent, it is important that the 'essential' intragender commonality of experience is established - the 'essential' woman. In effect the diversity of human experience is negated: it is reduced to sexuality. This seriously undermines the potential for generating a holistic, comprehensive analysis of gender interaction specifically, and social interaction generally.

The division of women into whores or madonnas, while explicitly denounced, is in effect a guiding principle of the literature reviewed. The conceptual baggage of the moral majority is employed to discredit and justify interpreting, rather than accepting the understanding of skin and sex trade workers which is inconsistent with the feminist vision. Defining the understanding of the workers as expressions of 'false consciousness' duplicates malestream thought on immoral women.

The rhetorical promotion of women coupled with the exclusion and denial of the voice of women in the skin and sex trades is politically expedient and conveniently ensures that the internal consistency and ideology of the theory is not threatened however, it is - contraves the central feminist principle that experience constitutes substantive, viable knowledge. It also conflicts with the understanding that feminism is grounded in the experiences of women.

In spite of the overt rejection of the methods and ideology of science, feminism presents itself as reified knowledge - science. Feminism's claim to truth is grounded not in scientific methodology but the articulation of 'woman-sense' - what women know by virtue

of their experience as women in patriarchal society. However feminism, like science, embraces the concept of reality in absolute terms and has "its own method, its own testing ground, its own special language and a system of results" (Smart, 1989:9). The feminist literature reviewed on the skin and sex trades suggest there is a 'Truth' about women's lives that can be realized through the application of a theoretical framework. Accordingly the status of truth allows understandings that conflict with feminist ideology to be named not true - wrong.

Feminist 'praxis' is the reconciliation of the theoretical understandings of patriarchal gender relations within the concrete experience of this dynamic in women's lives. I am arguing that the failure to do this is revealed in the preceding analysis some of the pornography and prostitution literature. Therefore it would follow that a dialectical relation between practice and theory must be established.

This thesis supports the contention that there is a need to develop a non-sexist feminist criminology that acknowledges and seeks to overcome androcentric conceptual constructs. What is required is a analysis which reconciles the practical concrete reality of women's lives and the theoretical understanding of gender hierarchy. To do this, we must be prepared to step outside of our reality in order to identify how our world view is a function of feminist and malestream biases, values, beliefs and constructs which determine the interpretation of the social world we promote.

Without such consciousness of the self as product and instrument of the dominant ideology praxis can never be realized as it requires the meeting of different understandings. The establishment of a dialectic relation that facilitates the informing of theory by concrete reality would mean in real terms that no experience can be dismissed or denied, but rather the theory would be modified according to the new knowledge.

The preceding analysis identified some disturbing trends within some of the feminist prostitution and pornography literature. It suggests that some of the current application of feminist theory contravenes the political/personal mandate of redefining woman as the subject of discourse. These findings should not be interpreted as indicating that criminology should abandon the effort of integrating feminist understanding into its theoretical frameworks, in fact all work must acknowledge the problematic nature of gender relations. Criminologists, applying feminist consciousness, must remain cognisant of their reliance on pervasive, but ideologically 'loaded', conceptual frameworks and of the implications of the knowledge created.

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