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GLOBAL NEOLIBERAL GOVERNANCE AND
THE SEX INDUSTRY–
A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN?

Exposing the paradox of modern gender equality through
the eyes of erotic dancers in Great Britain

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AIRIAINEN, MONNA: Global Neoliberal Governance And The Sex Industry – A Match Made In Heaven: Exposing the paradox of modern day gender equality through the eyes of erotic dancers in Great Britain.

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In this thesis I research the relationship between the global political economy and the global sex industry. I am interested in how women are turned into commodities, objects, subjects or objects through the process of commodification, subjectivation and objectivation in our so-called free, equal and liberal democracies. I will attempt to investigate how the Foucauldian concepts of “bio-power” and “bio-politics” are used in global neoliberal governance, and how through these measures human beings are governed, or rather disciplined and controlled, and how this in turn creates, supports, and maintains the global sex industry and the multiple inequalities it feeds on. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how the neoliberal world order and global governance create the space in which the global sex industry operates. I will attempt to show how neoliberal global governance creates global, gendered and ethnic inequalities, which in turn make the global political economy of sex possible. In other words, how global governance subjectivates individually and collectively to create different types of subject positions in a given society and in the global political economy as a whole. My primary research material will comprise of interviews and informal conversations with erotic dancers and their customers, (including observations) at one particular gentlemen's club in Brighton, the United Kingdom. The methodology I chose is ethnography, which combines several methods that are useful and necessary for conducting this type of fieldwork research, such as various types of interviewing and observations. The theoretical foundation is built upon previous research done on the topic, with my specific focus using the works of Michel Foucault and others as a lens.

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I Introduction

1.1 The Global Political Economy of Sex and International Relations

Despite that fact that women's rights have been a persistent topic in the media, policy-making circles, international community and academia for decades now, we still witness extreme forms of violence and oppression against women and girls in every corner of the world. Be it rape, forced prostitution, exclusion from politics, lack of access to schooling and health care, arranged marriage or honour killings women are "being destroyed", as Johanna Korhonen put it in Helsingin Sanomat.¹ What has struck me during my five years of studies in International Relations (IR) is the lack of focus on these issues in the discipline. During my undergraduate studies in England I remember only one seminar on feminist theory and one on women's role in the global political economy. This can hardly be called sufficient. Hence, I wanted to write my thesis about one particular group of hidden women that is women who work in the global sex industry. I am aware that the global sex industry is not a typical topic or issue of IR and that many would in fact argue that this topic should not be addressed within the framework of the discipline of IR. However, one aim of this thesis is to challenge the boundaries of IR and what can be studied within it.

I am not alone in this venture. Many feminist IR scholars have termed the global sex industry the "global political economy of sex", thus locating it within the realm of IR and International Political Economy (IPE). For these scholars the sex industry is very much linked to globalisation, international political economy and to neoliberal policies (see for example Penttinen 2004 and Pettman 1998 in Kofman and Youngs 1998). This line of feminist research attempts to locate women in the international relations arena and uncover the inherent multiple inequalities and gender biases that exist within IPE and IR.

Feminist IR authors started to enter the field in the 1980s asking questions such as, where are the women in IR? Some key authors and texts include Jean Bethke Elshstain's "Women and War" (1987), Cynthia Enloe's "Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Relations" (1989), J. Ann Tickner's "Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security" (1992) and "Gendering World Politics" (2001), Jan Pettman's "Worlding Women" (1996), and Christine Sylvester's "Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era" (2004). These scholars attempted to challenge the "malestream" IR

¹ Korhonen, Johanna, "Naisten tuhoamisesta". Helsingin Sanomat 01.12.2010
<http://www.hs.fi/verkkolehti/kulttuuri/artikkeli/1135262040030>

approaches towards core IR concepts such as war, security, power and the world order by examining and exposing the gendered nature of IR and the crucial role women play in, for example, wars and the global economy.

Moreover, another type of feminist research (which traditionally has belonged to the fields of sociology and women's studies/gender studies) that focuses on various types of violence against women, persistent gender inequality and patriarchy, and the global sex industry (including prostitution, exotic dancing, mail-order brides, militarised prostitution, sex trafficking, sex tourism, pornography), has also entered the discipline of IR. This line of research is not just looking for the women but also asking questions such as, where is the “missing body” in IR and IPE? In other words, these scholars wish to expose the “embodied” nature of the political economy (Youngs, 2000). Landmark studies include for example, Judith Butler's works from 1990, 1993, 1995 and 1997, “Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism” (1994) by Elisabeth Grosz, “This Sex Which is Not One (1985) by Luce Irigaray, and “Female Sexual Slavery” (1984) by Kathleen Barry. Furthermore, the influence of Michel Foucault's work on almost all of the aforementioned authors is central.

More contemporary studies on the workings of the global political economy of sex and body politics include various articles by Donna Hughes (2004, 2005) on prostitution and sex trafficking, J.J Pettman (1997) on international sex tourism, mail-order brides among others, Gillian Youngs (2004) on embodied political economy and power, Danielle Egan (2005) on erotic dancing, and Anne-Maria Marttila (2003) on prostitution clients, to name a few. The work which has been most important and influential for my own research is Elina Penttinen's PhD thesis titled “*Corporeal Globalization: Narratives of Subjectivity and Otherness in the Sexscapes of Globalization*” (2004), in which she argues that the global sex industry operates as a form of embodied “shadow globalisation”. The aforementioned literature will be introduced in more detail in the following chapters. In this study I wish to continue and expand this line of research by looking deeper into the world of erotic dancing in one particular erotic club in England.

1.2 Aim of the study and the research question

Previous research that I found on erotic dancing tends to focus on the sociological aspects of the relationship between the customers and the dancers, or in IR, on the Western sex-tourism to South East Asia, or on the phenomenon of women coming from developing countries to work as strippers in the West. My own study combines elements from all of the above and tries to argue that there is indeed something quite novel and fascinating about the relationship between global neoliberal governance and what is currently happening in the erotic clubs in Britain. Moreover, I have not seen any studies of “up-scale” erotic dance clubs that have both Western and Third World dancers working together. I believe that such clubs provide an interesting research field due to various reasons that will be discussed in detail in the analysis chapter.

In this thesis I research the relationship between the global political economy and the global sex industry. I am interested in how women are turned into commodities, objects, subjects or objects through the process of commodification, subjectivation and objectivation in our so-called free, equal and liberal democracies. I will attempt to investigate how the Foucauldian concepts of “bio-power” and “bio-politics” are used in global neoliberal governance, and how through these measures human beings are governed, or rather disciplined and controlled, and how this in turn creates, supports, reproduces and maintains the global sex industry and the multiple inequalities it feeds on.

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how the neoliberal world order and global governance create the space in which the global sex industry operates. I will attempt to show how neoliberal global governance creates global, gendered and ethnic inequalities, which in turn make the global political economy of sex possible. In other words, how global governance subjectivates individually and collectively to create different types of subject positions in a given society and in the global political economy as a whole.

My broader research question thus is: How does global neoliberal governance (re)produce and support the global sex industry and gender inequality in the world of erotic dancing? Followed by a more specific question: What kind of subject positions can be found in one specific lap dancing club and how do these positions emerge?

1.3 The case study and method

My primary research material will comprise of interviews and informal conversations with erotic dancers and their customers (including observations) at one particular gentlemen's club in Brighton, the United Kingdom. This club is part of a worldwide US chain of gentlemen's clubs. The club prides itself as being “one of America's top Gentlemen's clubs featuring the most beautiful ladies around the world”. The club's website claims that they are devoted “to creating a collection of upscale clubs unlike any other in the world”.² The club offers pole dancing shows and both nude and semi-nude lap dancing. The club has a strict non-contact policy, which means that it does not allow any physical contact between the dancers and customers. The club in Brighton welcomes women and couples as customers and it is a popular destination for both bachelor and bachelorette parties. Secondary material will include studies done by others on erotic dancing and other aspects of the sex industry and global political economy. Due to the scope of the thesis I am focusing my field research on erotic dancing, although it is naturally just one aspect of the global political economy of sex. Moreover, as erotic dancing is the most accessible and legal area of the sex industry, I was able to gain access to the club without great difficulty and make contact with both the dancers and the customers.

The methodology I chose is ethnography, which combines several methods that are useful and necessary for conducting this type of fieldwork research, such as various types of interviewing and observations. Traditionally it is a method that is used, for example, by anthropologists and sociologists to study previously undiscovered civilizations or unknown social phenomena. In the discipline of IR, ethnography has been used mainly by feminist IR scholars who try to challenge mainstream IR methods and theories by researching issues that have traditionally been left in the margins of IR. In general it could be argued that their aim is to show that individual lived experiences can also be studied as legitimate knowledge of a given phenomenon within the field of IR. In this study I try to do exactly this: find something general through the particular. I argue that by giving the erotic dancers a voice and by paying special attention to their individual experiences it is possible to critically analyse global trends such as neoliberal globalisation and global governance.

² I am unable give a detailed reference here to the club's website due to confidentiality.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

The first part of this thesis will introduce the theoretical framework upon which the analysis will be built. Theorising the global sex industry in general and the individual experiences of erotic dancers at one particular lap dancing club is by no means an easy task. The idea for my theory comes from authors such as Elina Penttinen, who has examined the relationship between the embodied subjectivity of the women who work in the sex industry in Finland and globalisation. Penttinen, amongst other “feminist” writers, builds her argument on the works of Michel Foucault. I will also selectively use Foucault’s ideas of governmentality and bio-politics, as well as his theory of subject formation and bio-power to enable me to draw a link between the practices of global neoliberal governance and the global political economy of sex. The purpose of the theory is to examine how neoliberal governance, which operates in the global political economy, creates different subject positions and consequent inequalities, which on the one hand, have a negative impact on equality between men and women, and on the other hand, support the global sex industry.

After the theoretical foundations have been laid, it is time to take a closer look at the broader research field that is being examined, namely the “global political economy of sex”. To establish the linkages between different areas of the global sex industry and the political economy as a whole, four different yet interconnected aspects of the sex industry will be discussed. These are: prostitution, sex trafficking, sex tourism and erotic dancing. In this chapter I will attempt to show how neoliberal globalisation and other neoliberal policies have helped the global sex industry to flourish.

The following chapter introduces a methodological option for studying this complex, and often hidden research field. I chose to use ethnography as, in my view, it provided me with the best tools to firstly, conduct my field work and secondly, to analyse it. Ethnography allowed me to use observations and different types of interviews to examine what is really going on inside the club and how it might be linked to global neoliberal governance. The methodology chapter is followed by an analysis that tracks the path that was laid out in the theory section to analyse systematically the field work data in order to demonstrate how neoliberal global governance is present at the club. In the sixth and final chapter I attempt to draw some final conclusions and thoughts.

II Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction: Why look at the world through gender-sensitive lenses?

Feminism, feminist methodologies, theories and feminist scholars have had a tough time trying to enter the discipline of International Relations (IR). Feminism has struggled to gain ground amongst the “malestream”³ social-scientific methodologies and frameworks of IR theories. Feminism has faced various levels of scepticism, criticism and even dismissal. In recent years, however, we have seen an improvement in the number of IR textbooks that actually have a chapter on feminism. Nevertheless one can’t help but think that these chapters are mainly symbolic and there to keep the “feminists” happy. Amongst other things, feminists have been criticised for their struggle to develop a universal agenda that theorises the state-centric issues that are central to IR. Feminists tend to focus on low politics instead of high politics, or in other words, on the individual rather than the international. Consequently, feminism is often seen as a subfield of the main field of IR. Moreover, the lines between academic and political feminism, third world and first world feminism and even feminism within Europe are blurred and contested.⁴

One of the main issues that feminists have been criticised for is their apparent lack of an appropriate research project on core IR issues, such as the state. However, feminists argue that mainstream IR theorists do not pay attention to the fact that politics is a male-dominated and male orientated field and consequently, most states are run by men. Feminists have attempted to reveal the gendered nature of our modern states by examining how the state constructs unequal power relations between men and women. One recent example of this is Johanna Kantola’s book *Feminists Theorize the State* (2006), in which she explore the current status of gender equality by analysing the debates over childcare and domestic violence in Great Britain and Finland, the feminist state theory and women’s policy institutions in twelve Western countries.

Feminists in general argue that the public/private divide is not a natural distinction – it has been socially constructed and it perpetuates power relations between men and women. Due to this split many women around the world have little access to social and political decisions. Women

³ “Malestream” is a term often used by feminists to criticise the lack of focus on issues of gender in the mainstream IR theories.

⁴ See for example, Tickner, J. A, *Gendering World Politics* (Columbia University Press: 2001) and Youngs, G, “Feminist International Relations: a contradiction in terms? Or: why women and gender are essential to understanding the world ‘we’ live in”, *International Affairs*, 2004, Issue 80, No. 1

are seen as *naturally* or *biologically* belonging to the private sphere taking care of the home, the family and the children. Moreover, the private sphere is often ignored by the state and international organisations. This enforced gender hierarchy has become “natural” and “inevitable”, which in turn has made patriarchy the norm rather than the exception. It could then be argued that ‘the history of state formation and identity is therefore one of gendered (and other forms) of oppression.’⁵ This realisation has inspired feminists to start “rethinking” the state and to call ‘for a form of democracy that dismantles oppressive social hierarchies’.⁶

Youngs explains that feminists see malestream IR theories as representing, examining and also, thus, constructing and maintaining a partial view of the world that ignores the ‘gendered, racialized and socio-economic dimensions’ of how power really works. The task of the feminists is therefore both “deconstructive” and “reconstructive”. In other words, feminists try to expose the ‘masculinist limitations’ of mainstream IR theories by looking at the world through ‘gender-sensitive lenses’.⁷ Penttinen agrees by arguing that ‘the discipline of IR operates as a form of exclusionary power that excludes voices and forms of expression outside the sphere of IR’.⁸ The malestream IR theories have little to say about the global political economy of sex and the role global neoliberal governance plays in creating and maintaining it. Hence, this is exactly why I wish to utilise gender analysis and gender friendly ethnographic methodology in my thesis.

The inspiration for my theoretical framework comes largely from Elina Penttinen's PhD thesis on embodied subjectivity and otherness in the “sexscapes” of globalisation. Penttinen builds her argument around the rather fluid and contested phenomenon of globalisation. In my thesis I am not using globalisation as the overarching concept, but rather I see global neoliberal governance that operates in the embodied Global Political Economy (GPE⁹), as the underlying structure, which support and creates the global sex industry and the various inequalities that it needs in order to exist. Naturally, different aspects of globalisation are part of neoliberal governance and GPE, and these are discussed in more detail in the background chapter on the global political economy of sex, and in the analysis chapter. In short, the purpose of my theoretical framework is to enable me to draw a link between the practises of global neoliberal governance and the global political economy of sex.

⁵ Youngs, 2004: 80, see also Tickner, 2001, p. 121-124

⁶ Tickner, 2001: 124

⁷ Youngs, 2004: 77

⁸ Penttinen, E, “Globalization, Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking, Corporeal politics (2008), New York: Routledge, p. 8

⁹ GPE is more commonly called IPE (international political economy); however the two terms will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

In order to do this and thus also to discover the hidden commodified bodies of women within the neoliberal world order, I will move from the global to the local, or rather from the collective international to the localised individual via four steps. The first step is to explain what I mean by the terms “embodied GPE” and “global neoliberal governance”. Thus, I will first briefly elaborate on the novel venture undertaken by a selection of feminist scholars to study and theorise the “missing body” and the position of the global sex industry within the disciplines of IR and IPE. Secondly, the concept of global governance will be discussed. Numerous scholars have written about global governance, but I will focus on Hardt and Negri's critique of *Empire*, which, I will argue, could also partly be seen as representing or being synonymous to global neoliberal governance. Julian Reid's views on global liberal governance will also be discussed to further elaborate on how the concept of global governance will be used in my thesis. Although Reid does not write about the global sex industry I will attempt to show how his theorising on liberalism's paradoxical nature in relation to its own population could help us understand how the global sex industry and global neoliberal governance are linked.

The next step is to examine how neoliberal governance works in practice, that is, how governmentality and bio-politics operate on the ground. Here I will firstly discuss the concept of governmentality as originally theorised by Michel Foucault and how it has been interpreted by others. Secondly, I will present Johan Galtung's theory of cultural, structural and direct violence as an aspect of neoliberalist bio-politics. Finally, the fourth step leads us to the “body” of the woman who operates in the global political economy of sex. Here I will firstly follow in Penttinen's footsteps when it comes to her theorising of bio-power and subjectivation, which she builds on Foucault's and Butler's theories of subject formation. I will also offer my own interpretation of Foucault's theory by discussing the question of how human beings are transformed into subjects, abjects and objects and how they in turn can gain agency and use different self-disciplining methods in the process. Secondly, the way in which women and female bodies are represented in the media and advertising in the West will be examined to expose the paradoxical nature of the 21st century female emancipation and empowerment. The core concepts that will guide me through my research and form the theoretical background for my study thus are: embodied global political economy, global neoliberal governance, bio-political governmentality and subjectivation/representation.

2.2 Embodied Global Political Economy

For Gillian Youngs the disciplines of IR and IPE have traditionally failed to recognise the importance of the gendered nature of power in the political economy. She argues that a ‘gender analysis’ of states, markets, institutions and also wars, exposes ‘the extent and social meanings of masculinist assumptions about the nature of human subject’. Gender analysis thus works to expose the structural and unequal way power is exercised on the male and female bodies in the political economy, hence its aim is to uncover the gendered forms of power that have before been left unexplored in IPE and IR.¹⁰

Pettman explains that ‘international politics and global political economy impact directly and often violently upon the bodies of actual people. The body you are in places you, or me, on one side of the other boundaries that mark both power relations and entitlements’.¹¹ This creates inclusion and exclusion which in its most extreme case can mean the difference between life and death. Pettman argues that ‘these body politics’ are not recognised in disciplines that are ‘practised as disembodied’. This disembodiment has enabled IR and GPE to develop ‘safe from the mess, pain, pleasure and desire of actual bodies –though at times in language which suggested pleasure and danger were just a word away’.¹² Pettman states that feminist research exposes ‘bodies inscribed with differences that matter’:

*gendered, racialized, culturalized, classed – and sexualized. Sex – as desire, danger, eroticized bodies, transgressions, violations –comes through women’s experiences in identity conflicts, as boundary markers or community possessions, as women warriors, as commodified cheap labour on the global assembly line, as labour migrants, ‘foreign’ domestic workers and international sex workers.*¹³

Youngs sees discourse as a very powerful tool in IPE, in the sense that it can make humans visible or invisible depending on how they are represented in dominant discourses that are used by states, markets, institutions of the law, ‘knowledge-based areas’ (such as science and technology), and in the investigation of the private-public split.¹⁴ Feminist IPE literature does not view these discursive structures and social power relations as something static and given, instead it attempts to reveal how and why they emerged in the first place. Youngs explains that ‘discursive

¹⁰ Gillian Youngs (eds.), *Political Economy, Power & the Body: Global Perspectives*, (Macmillan Press: UK, 2000) p.13

¹¹ Pettman, J in Youngs, 2000: 52

¹² Ibid: 52

¹³ Ibid: 53

¹⁴ Youngs, 2000: 22

structures and practices are embedded in, and reflective of, those origins and processes. Thus, we must think about the extent to which “the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed” (Foucault 1984:109).¹⁵

One of the most radical agendas of the feminist writers is their pursuit of eradicating the public/private split and bringing sexuality, which is something that has traditionally belonged to the private sphere, to the forefront of the public sphere. The inspiration for this kind of analysis stems from Foucault’s theorising of sexuality being something that is connected to all aspects of society. This can be seen in the way in which the discursive practices that exist in a given society discipline and control the individual and his or her sexuality. By doing this feminists are bringing together sexuality and politics – by no means an easy task – in the masculinist *high politics* field of IR.¹⁶

*It is thus not an overstatement to argue that women and their experience, the importance of public/private social dynamics, of gendered relations of power, are hidden Russian-doll style within the assumed boundaries of masculinist constructions of politics – the higher the politics, the more they are hidden.*¹⁷

The concept of embodied global political economy is often used in theorising and analysing the global sex industry, which is commonly understood as comprising of different forms of prostitution, sex tourism, mail-order brides, erotic dancers, pornography among others. It should be noted however, that I have not come across research that would attempt to challenge or redefine the concepts *sex industry* or *global sex business*; moreover the theorising of these phenomenon seems to be rather limited to feminist analysis of unequal power relations and masculinist world order. I see this lack of alternative interpretations being connected to the fact that this line of research has only recently entered the mainstream academia, alongside the third wave of feminism. This is especially true in the disciplines of IR and IPE. Thus, it is likely that new approaches and interpretations of the complexity of the sex industry will surface in the future, which is a desirable and natural process in any academic research. It would be desirable, for example, to include men and minority groups such as trans-gendered people and other sexualities in to the discussion about global sex industry.

My own study of the erotic dancers in one particular lap dancing club in England could be said to belong to this current body of feminist research, as it is an attempt to bring together

¹⁵ Ibid: 22

¹⁶ Ibid: 23

¹⁷ Ibid: 23

sexuality, unequal power relations, neoliberalism, and embodied global political economy. I will, however, try to offer something new to the topic by examining how neoliberalism has penetrated all aspects of our society and how this has commodified women in various ways, and, more importantly, I will question whether there is a place in a neoliberal society for a non-commodified woman. Nevertheless, I am hesitant in describing my study as a *feminist* study, as I do not support the prevalent trend that labels all research that focuses on women as feminist. In my opinion one doesn't have to be a feminist to incorporate a gendered aspect to one's research. It is simply common sense to realise the gendered aspect of, for example, power relations. Maybe this is one reason why at many Universities *women's studies* departments are called *gender studies* departments. It is difficult to say why IR has been so prone to neglect gender issues. One might assume that it has something to do with the origins of the theory, namely the time period it was born in and the founding fathers of IR who were mainly –if not wholly– men, such as classical writers Hobbes, Thucydides, Machiavelli and Clausewitz, and more recently Hans Morgenthau and E.H Carr, that focused on high politics issues such as war, peace, power, economics and so forth. Moreover, it could be argued that the very idea of “rational thought” is itself gendered. The basis of our thoughts is implicated in this – beyond the realm of IR. This is precisely why I argue that adding the “feminist label” can in fact have a counterproductive effect in IR because of the often negative connotations the word *feminist* carries. I, for example, cannot see some of the most famous IR thinkers within the mainstream theories starting to call themselves feminists; however I could see them possibly adding a gendered aspect to their work.

2.3 Global Neoliberal Governance

2.3 a) Liberalism vs. neoliberalism

Firstly, it is important to clarify why I prefer to call global governance *neoliberal* rather than *liberal*. The main reason for this is the fact that neoliberalism incorporates the importance of markets and other non-state actors into practises of governance. Penttinen explains that the logic of neoliberalism is different from liberalism because it is dependent on marketisation and market forces, and it operates globally.¹⁸ Penttinen points out that ‘in this way states are also subject to the market and the position of the individual subject transforms into a consumer subject

¹⁸ Penttinen, 2008: 131

of government and of the global market'.¹⁹ Neoliberalism can thus be seen as 'the economic doctrine and political ideology primarily associated with the most powerful elements of internationally mobile capital'.²⁰ Furthermore, Wendy Larner argues that the unique difference between liberalism and neoliberalism is that 'neo-liberalism is both a political discourse about the nature of rule and a set of practices that facilitate the governing of individuals from a distance'²¹.

Thomas Lemke takes on the task of reconstructing Foucault's lecture series on neoliberal governmentality at the College de France in 1979. He starts with Foucault's interpretation of Chicago school's neoliberalism. He explains that according to Foucault in a neoliberal society it is the market that controls and organises the state –not vice versa. The principles of economics, such as cost-benefit calculations and market criteria penetrate the whole society and extend to all domains, which mean that they can be used in decision-making processes in, for example, the family.²² The state however, has not been rendered obsolete by neoliberalism, quite the opposite: to control the 'economic-rational individuals' the state has simply adapted and changed its role by developing new techniques 'for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them'.²³ This strategy of making individuals internalise the fact that they are responsible for the consequences of their free decisions and actions is a key feature of a neoliberal society. However, Foucault argues that in reality the choices are 'an artificially created form of behaviour' that operates in 'an artificially arranged liberty'.²⁴

2.3 b) Global Governance

Global governance is a concept that can mean many things depending on who you ask and in what context it is talked about. Perhaps the general and traditional understanding of the concept is that it is a set of values, rules, practices and regulations, which are distributed and enforced globally by a web of international institutions, organisation, regimes and corporations. Dillon and Reid sum up the term governance as follows:

In its Kantian variants, it means the rule of law and endorses the proliferation of non-governmental organizations, associations, and groups at a global level with the

¹⁹ Ibid: 131

²⁰ Stephen Gill 1995: 1, quoted in Penttinen 2004: 132

²¹ Wendy Larner, "Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality", Studies in Political Economy, No. 63, Autumn 2000 (<http://spe.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/spe/article/viewFile/6724/3723>), p. 6

²² Lemke, Thomas, "'The Birth of Bio-Politics': Michel Foucault's lecture at the College de France on neoliberal governmentality", Economy and Society, Vol. 30, No. 2, May 2001, p. 200

²³ Ibid: 201

²⁴ Ibid: 200

*ambition of establishing a global civil society. In its technocratic-capitalist variants, it means deregulated processes and practices of enterprise management and accountability.*²⁵

Larner mentions that the global governance literature makes a point of separating government and governance, because even though neoliberal policies ‘may mean less government, it does not follow that there is less governance’. That is, neoliberal governance means that individuals are made to believe that they have more opportunity to exercise free choice, when in fact they are constantly being governed to ‘conform to the norms of the market’.²⁶ Rosenau agrees with this point by making it very clear that ‘governance is not synonymous with government’.²⁷ The main difference according to him is the legitimatisation of their activities: governments can implement policies that do not have to be accepted by the majority as they have institutions, such as the police, to back them up. Governance, however, ‘is a system of rule that works only if it is accepted by the majority (or, at least, the most powerful of those it affects)...’²⁸ How then did the current form of global neoliberal governance emerge and why?

Duffield connects the emergence of global liberal governance with the shift ‘from a capitalist to a liberal world order’. He explains that ‘global capitalism no longer operates on the basis of expansion and incorporation but on a new logic of consolidation and exclusion’.²⁹ Rosenau argues that the shift from government to governance is closely connected to the changing global order that has undermined the sovereignty of states and shifted some of their governing authority to non-state actors.³⁰ Dillon and Reid are, however, more cautious about the notion of the demise of sovereignty. They argue that liberal states are in fact key players in the ‘networks of global governance’. To them the ‘state form – whose strategic principle of formation is sovereignty – becomes just one form of subjectification upon which global liberal governance relies’.³¹

Penttinen on the other hand sees the concept of population as the central variant in the shift from what she calls welfare-state governmentality to liberalist and neoliberalist forms of governmentality. She writes that ‘the concerns of bio-politics are, as Foucault (1997: 73) explains,

²⁵ Michael Dillon & Julian Reid “Global Governance, Liberal Peace, and Complex Emergency”, *Alternatives*, No 25, (2000), p. 124

²⁶ Larner, 2000: 12

²⁷ Rosenau, James N & Chempiel, E-O, eds., *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) p. 3-4

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Duffield, Mark, *Global Governance and the New Wars* (London: Pluto, 2001), p. 4

³⁰ Rosenau, 1992: 4

³¹ Dillon & Reid, 2000: 127

the administration and rationalization of “problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living beings constituted as population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race...”³² Consequently, as the meaning of the term *population* has varied in different times in history it has also determined how governmentality has worked in practice. For example in the 18th century populations were ruled with totalitarian power. The Kings were interested only in how to get men to go to war and how to control the population as a whole. With the birth of the modern liberal nation-state the idea of the individual citizen with rights and freedom emerged, and with it bio-politics that aim at ‘governing populations to responsible liberty’.³³

An important aspect here is also that the ‘administration of life’ in liberal societies is not only territorially bound. Within the society one can become excluded from the population and from the right to exercise freedom, such as the poor, mentally ill or criminals. In order for the excluded to re-enter the population they must conform to the liberal logic. Penttinen argues that ‘this shows also how the becoming of the subject, or citizen of the thought-space of liberalist governance, is a question of hierarchy and exclusion’.³⁴ According to Penttinen the present day neoliberalism has taken governance to yet another level – this time to a global one.³⁵ This transformation has been made possible by the emergence of the global market that transcends territorial boundaries and makes all people “equal” in the face of the market forces, in a sense that only a person who consumes and takes part in the functions of global capital can be a subject with agency in the system. Thus, a new group can be added to the list of the excluded and included: the global consumer.

2.3 c) Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*

Hardt and Negri (2000) offer a very novel and innovative way of looking at the contemporary world order. Their concept of Empire has its origins in the long history from modernity to post-modernity – from imperialism to Empire. The shift was marked by many intertwined developments. For example, the birth of the United Nations marked the ideological shift to global norms and values, and the creation of the global market in the latter half of the twentieth

³² Penttinen, Elina, *Corporeal Globalization: Narratives of Subjectivity and Otherness in the Sexscapes of Globalization* (Tampereen yliopistopaino Oy Juvenus Print: Tampere, 2004), p. 128

³³ Ibid: 129

³⁴ Ibid: 131

³⁵ Ibid: 131

century ‘destroyed the fixed boundaries and hierarchical procedures of European imperialisms’.³⁶ They argue that ‘along with the global market and global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule – in short, a new form of sovereignty’.³⁷

For Hardt and Negri yet another turning point was the shift from what Foucault calls a “disciplinary society” to what Gilles Deleuze calls the “society of control”. Disciplinary society is a society in which a number of “disciplinary institutions” such as schools, factories, prisons etc, ‘produce and regulate customs, habits, and productive practises’. Whereas the ‘society of control’ is a society ‘in which mechanisms of command become ever more “democratic,” ever more immanent to the social field’.³⁸ Moreover, they state that Foucault’s work identifies ‘the biopolitical nature of the new paradigm of power’. In short, ‘biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it’.³⁹

For Hardt and Negri the concept of biopolitics is crucial in the constitution of *Empire*. They explain that ‘the source of imperial normativity is born of a new machine, a new economic-industrial-communicative machine – in short, a globalized biopolitical machine’.⁴⁰ This machine produces and reproduces all aspect of life; it manages, organises, dominates, and when necessary, intervenes. Hence, ‘the sovereignty of Empire itself is realized at the margins, where borders are flexible and identities are hybrid and fluid’. The point to remember though is that the core and borders of Empire are not static, but rather appear to be in constant movement.⁴¹ Consequently, when an individual, group or even a whole population fails to meet Empire’s criteria for what is ‘defensible human life’ they become its ‘barbarian others’ no matter where in the Empire they are located.⁴²

Global order and power is thus controlled by a ‘decentred network’ that includes ‘the dominant nation states, supranational organisation, such as the United Nations and the IMF, multinational corporations, NGOs, the media, and others’.⁴³ In their words: ‘Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentred and

³⁶ Hardt M, & Negri A, *Empire* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 4, 246

³⁷ Ibid: xv

³⁸ Ibid: 22-23

³⁹ Ibid: 23-24

⁴⁰ Ibid: 40

⁴¹ Ibid: 31, 39

⁴² Coward, M, “The Imperial Character of the Contemporary World Order”, *Theory and Event*, Vol. 8 No. 1 (2005), p. 863

⁴³ Negri, A, interviewed by Ida Dominijanni, “The Imperialist backlash on Empire”, 18 September 2003

detritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open expanding frontiers'.⁴⁴ In my study Hardt and Negri's critique of the contemporary world system is understood as representing, or rather, being and acting, as global neoliberal governance.

Julian Reid's conceptualisation of the global order, I argue, bears close resemblance to some aspects of Hardt and Negri's concept of Empire. Reid names liberal societies 'logistical societies':

*In order to critique liberalism, we must first of all consider the ferocious violence with which it deploys techniques to penetrate and organise the dispositions of liberal subjects themselves, i.e. Its creation of what we might term 'logistical societies' based on principles of control, communication and information.*⁴⁵

Reid argues that liberalism should be seen as 'a strategy of power'.⁴⁶ The success of this strategy is based on the notion that it can combine the management of how people not only act but also how they think. Reid draws his ideas from Foucault who argues that knowledge and power are intrinsically connected, and the way in which global governance controls populations depends on how well it can also govern knowledge. In Reid's words: 'the governance of knowledge, is thus seen, an integral aspect of biopower'.⁴⁷

Dillon and Reid understand global liberal governance as being formed of 'liberal complexes', which 'comprise an extraordinary regime of power/knowledge that has been disseminated as much globally as as it has been intensified locally'. In this regime money, the media and the elite exercise power through various institutions, which in turn undermine the very values and principles liberalism was founded upon. By this Reid and Dillon mean the way in which in a liberal society people are supposed to be free subjects who are capable of making decision for themselves, and how liberalism claims to 'effect representative and accountable government policy'.⁴⁸ Consequently, this gives global liberal governance a paradoxical and very disturbing nature. Reid applies the paradoxical nature of liberal governance to a powerful critique of the "liberal peace theory", the current "war on terror" and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; however, I

⁴⁴ Hardt & Negri, 2000: xiii

⁴⁵ Julian Reid, "War, Liberalism and Modernity: The Biopolitical Provocations of 'Empire'", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 17, No 1, April 2004, p. 64

⁴⁶ Ibid: 67

⁴⁷ Ibid: 73

⁴⁸ Michael Dillon & Julian Reid "Global Governance, Liberal Peace, and Complex Emergency", *Alternatives*, No 25 (2000), p. 125

argue that it can also be applied to critiquing the embodied nature of the global political economy of sex.

Considering that Penttinen sees globalisation as ‘a system of subjectivating power’, it could be argued that *globalisation* (as used by Penttinen) bears resemblance to Hardt and Negri's concept of *Empire* and Julian Reid's conceptualisation of the term *global liberal governance*. In other words, the three concepts are all examining the same phenomenon from a different angle; hence they are not precisely identical but rather, in my opinion, complementary to each other. This comes as no surprise considering, for example, that all of the aforementioned authors use similar aspects of Foucault's theorising on bio-power and bio-politics as one of the core building blocks for their own arguments. In my thesis I am using the term *global neoliberal governance*, as in my view it can best combine the different elements of *Empire*, *globalisation* and *global liberal governance* that are important and relevant for my research topic.

2.4 Neoliberalist bio-politics and governmentality

2.4 a) Governmentality

Lemke argues that there are two sides to Foucault's use of the term “governmentality”. On one hand Foucault saw it as a form of *representation* and *intervention*, that is; the way in which the government enables itself to identify problems in the society and to offer rational solutions to them by establishing a ‘discursive field’ with the help of certain political mechanisms such as institutions, agencies, procedures and laws that allow the government to govern ‘the objects and subjects of political rationality’. On the other hand, to Foucault the concept extends beyond the realm of politics. He argues that in order to understand the subjectivating power relations of governance one must see the concept of governmentality in a broader sense that includes all areas of life. Consequently Foucault defines government as ‘the conduct of conduct’, and thus a term which ranges from ‘governing the self’, to ‘governing others’.⁴⁹

In neoliberalism the focus of interest has shifted from the logic of the markets to the economic rationality of individuals. How consumers make their free choices over how to allocate their money is a central element that needs to be analysed, as it is the economy that now determines

⁴⁹ Lemke, 2001: 191

all human action and behaviour.⁵⁰ The consumers' apparent free choice over how s/he uses money transforms the consumer into a 'behaviouristically manipulable being and the correlative of a governmentality, which systematically changes the variables of the 'environment' and can count on the "rational choice" of the individuals'.⁵¹ Foucault explains the fine balance between coercion and consent in governance as follows: 'Governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.'⁵²

*In other words, the theoretical strength of the concept of governmentality consists of the fact that it construes neo-liberalism not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality, but above all as a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists.*⁵³

Penttinen highlights the fact that Foucault separates 'mental and practical levels of governance'. The way in which at any given time in history the governing body has been able to legitimise its actions, rules and norms represents the mental level, and the way in which power has been organised in specific settings represents the practical level. The mental level is build upon the 'regime of truth', which refers to the way in which knowledge of what is right and wrong is produced in a given society.⁵⁴ According to Penttinen, Foucault underlines that 'the objective in disciplining societies is not obedience but adjustment to power'⁵⁵. Penttinen argues that women who operate in the global sex industry have done exactly this –adjusted to the prevalent representations of power and knowledge in the global economy.⁵⁶

2.4 b) The governmentality of sexuality

Foucault gives an interesting example of how bio-political governance has worked in practice by examining the way in which sex and sexuality became controlled in the modern society that emerged in the 19th century. He explains that this

...bourgeois, capitalist, or industrial society, call it what you will – did not confront sex with a fundamental refusal of recognition. On the contrary, it put into operation entire

⁵⁰ Ibid: 197

⁵¹ Ibid: 200

⁵² Ibid: 204

⁵³ Ibid: 203

⁵⁴ Penttinen, 2004: 124-125

⁵⁵ Ibid: 126

⁵⁶ Ibid: 126

*machinery for producing true discourses concerning it. Not only did it speak of sex and compel everyone to do so; it also set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex.*⁵⁷

Foucault understands this ‘machine’ as being a product of suspicion and fear towards sex. However, why the discourse machine emerged in the first place is a question that can be related to the chicken and egg question - which came first, fear or discourse of truth? Are the still prevalent suspicion, fear and never-ending curiosity towards sex just a product of hundreds of years of discourses of “truth”? Why is it that a thing that is as natural as eating or sleeping became seen as ‘the point of weakness where evil portents reach through us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends’⁵⁸? Furthermore, Foucault argues that for the past two centuries ‘the discourse of sex has been multiplied rather than rarefied’.⁵⁹

The worrying thing is that these multiplying discourses of sex and sexuality have been built on taboos and prohibitions that have acted in “defence”. This presents us with a paradox - the more sex was talked about the more hidden it became. Foucault calls this a ‘screen-discourse, a dispersion-avoidance’.⁶⁰ In practice this means that during the past two centuries discourses of sex were linked to science, medicine and religion. The Church, for example, used horrific examples to make people think sex was something dangerous and ungodly. In time these examples turned into accepted truths, also known as knowledge. Moreover, Foucault emphasises that reproductive sex became separated from ‘a medicine of sex’. Consequently, Foucault defines this time as the time of *pastoral power*.⁶¹ Another crucial way in which Christianity influenced people according to Foucault is the way in which ‘Christianity inaugurated a new attitude of people not so much toward sexual acts and the code of sexual ethics, but toward themselves, and this new relationship of people to themselves, the necessity to scrutinize and discover the truth about oneself and then verbalize this truth to others, affected people's attitude toward sexuality’.⁶² It can be argued that the remnants of these earlier discourses of sex are still present and influential in the global sex industry, as well as peoples’ everyday behaviour in our modern Western societies. Think of, for example, the persistent arguments in the debate over gay-rights and over prostitution.

⁵⁷ Foucault, M, (1978 English translation) “The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction”, p. 69

⁵⁸ Ibid: 69

⁵⁹ Ibid: 69

⁶⁰ Ibid: 53

⁶¹ Ibid: 54

⁶² Foucault “About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two lectures at Dartmouth”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (May, 1993), p.199

2.4 c) Structural violence as bio-political governance

Johan Galtung's theorising of violence can be used to expose another aspect of how neoliberal bio-political governance works. Galtung coined the term structural violence in 1969 when he separated personal and direct violence from structural violence, which is psychological and indirect. He argues that in structural violence 'the violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances'. For example 'when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance there is structural violence'.⁶³ Hence, to Galtung structural violence means social injustice, that is, inequality in the distribution of power that leads to *domination* over *aggression*. This means that the object of the violence may not recognise that s/he is a victim of violence and consequently does not complain about it. Structural violence is thus 'silent, it does not show – it is essentially static, it is the tranquil waters'.⁶⁴

In his later work Galtung adds *cultural violence* to his theory. He argues that cultural violence legitimises structural violence.

*Generally, a causal flow from cultural via structural to direct violence can be identified. The culture preaches, teaches, admonishes, eggs on, and dulls us into seeing exploitation and/or repression as normal and natural, or into not seeing them (particularly -not exploitation) at all.*⁶⁵

According to Galtung cultural and structural violence violate our basic needs such as survival, well-being, identity, and freedom needs, in different ways. For example, one can be alienated from the society if one doesn't internalise its culture, or one can experience repression through exploitation, or one can be kept in misery, 'on the outside', through segmentation, marginalisation and fragmentation.⁶⁶

Galtung also gives concrete examples of how cultural and structural violence feed of each other in the realms of religion, ideology, art and sciences. In religion there is the dichotomy of God and Satan, of the Chosen Ones and the Unchosen Ones. The examples of when this type of cultural violence has been used in legitimising structural and direct violence are plentiful.⁶⁷ Moreover, Galtung argues that with the secularisation process political ideologies have taken the

⁶³ Galtung, Johan, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), p. 171

⁶⁴ Ibid: 173

⁶⁵ Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1990), p. 295

⁶⁶ Ibid: 292-294

⁶⁷ Ibid: 297

place of religion and turned the modern state into a God-like figure, transforming the Chosen and Unchosen ones to “Self” and “Other” – ‘the value of Self; deflating, even debasing, the value of Other’.⁶⁸ According to Galtung this opens the door to structural violence. He explains:

It will tend to become a self-fulfilling prophecy: people become debased by being exploited, and they are exploited because they are seen as debased, dehumanized. When Other is not only dehumanized but has been successfully converted into an 'it', deprived of humanhood, the stage is set for any type of direct violence, which is then blamed on the victim. This is then reinforced by the category of the 'dangerous it', the 'vermin', or 'bacteria'.⁶⁹

The three different types of violence form a “violence triangle” that allows violence to start in any of its corners and expand to the others. Galtung warns that ‘with the violent structure institutionalized and the violent culture internalized, direct violence also tends to become institutionalized, repetitive, ritualistic, like a vendetta’.⁷⁰ I argue that Galtung’s violence triangle is also a useful tool for analysing the different aspect of the global sex industry, violence against women and gender inequality in general.

2.5 Subjectivation: To Be or Not To Be?

The aim of this fourth and final step of my theoretical framework is to examine how people become subjects and how they take different subject positions, such as a subject with agency or an abject without one. Moreover, the idea of a person being an object or a commodity will be discussed. Here the concept of representation is crucial, as the way in which women are represented in the media and advertising plays a huge role in the transformation from a subject to an object. This process is also known as the commodification of women.

2.5 a) Bio-power and subject

The central element in the subjectivation of people is power – bio-power to be more precise. Bio-power is the force that facilitates subjectivation in global neoliberal governance. Foucault characterises it as being a form of power that ‘applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize

⁶⁸ Ibid: 298

⁶⁹ Ibid: 298

⁷⁰ Ibid: 302

in him'.⁷¹ Foucault emphasises that what makes the modern state's power so strong is its ability to be 'both an individualizing and totalizing form of power'.⁷² He explains that 'we can see the state as a modern matrix of individualization or a new form of pastoral power'.⁷³

What makes the pastoral power new is the way in which its objective has moved from giving people salvation in after life to ensuring they already get it in this world. This means that various 'worldly' aims have overtaken religious ones. The transformation emerged with the successful penetration of the Church and their "accepted knowledge" in to all aspects of the society with the help of other institutions and actors that had adopted the Church's discourse of truth.⁷⁴ It could then be argued, based on Foucault's and Galtung's thoughts, that even though modern Western states are known to be secular, the old pastoral power is still present in the state institutions and all other aspects of the society. The state is thus like the Emperor with new clothes, or rather, clothes that have been altered to suite the current (secular) fashion.

Another central element of Foucault's understanding of power, according to MacLeod and Durrheil, is that it is 'not exercised from the exterior; it is not *possessed* by an individual, class or group, nor is it *centralised* in the law, economy or the state. Rather, it is immanent to everyday relationships including economic exchanges, knowledge relationships, sexual relations, etc'.⁷⁵ The way in which the power becomes *immanent* is through 'the operation of disciplinary power on the body', in other words, through bio-power. Bio-power has two interconnected objectives: the control of the population as a whole and the control of the individual body.⁷⁶ MacLeod and Durrheil argue that,

*[Foucault's] work on governmentality fills the gap concerning the interconnectedness of micro- and macro-levels of power analysis. With governmentality Foucauldian feminists are afforded a theoretical tool with which to analyse the complexity of oppressive relations of power that may take on diverse forms in modern society.*⁷⁷

This is precisely why I chose to utilise Foucault's ideas of power and governmentality to analyse the relations between erotic dancers and their customers in one specific strip club in the United

⁷¹ Foucault: "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (Summer, 1982), p. 781

⁷² Ibid: 782

⁷³ Ibid: 783

⁷⁴ Ibid: 784-785

⁷⁵ MacLeod, C. & Durrheim, K. (2002) "Foucauldian Feminism: the Implications of Governmentality", *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 32 (1). p. 2

⁷⁶ Ibid: 8

⁷⁷ Ibid: 14

Kingdom. In the next section the interaction between bio-power and subject is investigated by looking at the ways in which individuals turn into subjects.

2.5 b) The making of the subject

In order to understand how subjectivation works in practice it is necessary to briefly return to the beginning - to the overarching structure. Penttinen argues that ‘globalization operates as a form of subjectivating bio-power organized through the neoliberalist governmentality’⁷⁸. By this she means that through adapting to the practices and principles of governance individuals take different ‘sex-specific and ethnicized subject positions’ that are ‘embodied and incorporated’ in globalisation.⁷⁹ Take the eroticized and ethnicized Asian woman for example, or the “Eastern Girl”. These subject positions don’t just magically appear from outer space and get planted on women’s bodies. According to Penttinen they are created by globalisation. Thus, for Penttinen the process of subjectivation starts from, or in, globalisation. I, however, would replace the word *globalisation* with the words *global political economy*, because for me the phenomenon known as globalisation is too abstract and intangible to *do* anything or to be held accountable for anything. I base this argument on the fact that it is very difficult to say *what* or *who* creates and maintains globalisation, *where* and *when* it emerged and *where* and *how* it operates. This is supported by the fierce debate over the concept in, for example, the academia.

Penttinen explains that global neoliberal governance turns people into subjects by enforcing its specific set of values, rules, norms and market logic on the population. The individual must internalise and follow this neoliberalist “truth” in order to become a subject and gain agency within this system. Penttinen points out that ‘this subject is no longer the subject of governance, but rather the object of governance’.⁸⁰ However, what is important here is that the subject also has the freedom of choice which is so essential to neoliberalist logic. ‘The subject is then the embodiment of values and orientations of the market’, which is a ‘system of governmental consumerism’. This is very apparent in the global sex industry as both the customers and the people who provide the services are claimed to be free consumers following rational laws of supply and demand.⁸¹ Penttinen argues that despite this so-called freedom of choice the process of becoming a subject is not exactly free as ‘subjects are guided, disciplined and surveyed so that they are lead to the right

⁷⁸ Penttinen, 2008: 37

⁷⁹ Penttinen, 2004: 137

⁸⁰ Ibid: 134

⁸¹ Ibid: 135

and most convenient path'; neither is it 'gender-neutral'. For example, the process of subjectivation is different for Western males compared to lets say a woman from a less fortunate background.⁸²

Penttinen advances her argument through Michel Foucault's well-known subject formation theory. Foucault explains that there are three different ways in which bio-power subjectivates people. The first category includes people who become 'speaking subjects' through linguistics and philology or 'productive subjects' through their labor. The second way is through 'dividing practices', that is, 'the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others', for example, 'the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the "good boys"'. And finally, the third way is the way in which an individual can turn himself into a subject. Foucault gives an example of 'how men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of "sexuality"'.⁸³ Penttinen argues that these processes can turn the foreign women who come to work in the sex industry in the West into 'gendered', 'eroticized' and 'ethnicized' subjects, or rather 'abjects', that can be consumed by men.⁸⁴ The abjects are 'socially dead'; they 'disrupt order, threaten stability and harmony within a society, and simultaneously stir up horror and fascination within the subject'.⁸⁵ For Penttinen the women who work in the sex industry belong to the category of the abject, which enables the normal subject to exist. In my understanding by this she means that the normal subject, be it either a man or a woman, needs to see the foreign women who work in the sex industry as "socially dead" abjects in order to justify their silent acceptance or passive disapproval of the phenomenon. Both men and women can be simultaneously intrigued and appalled by women who work in the sex industry, however it is the foreign sex workers position as an abject that allows for the normal subject to maintain their clean and pure subjectivity - even when they are personally the ones that are consuming the women.

It should be noted thought that according to Foucault "a subject" has two meanings: 'subject to someone else by control and dependence', or 'tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge'.⁸⁶ This means that in order to analyse the subject one must bear in mind 'not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self' and the interaction between the two.⁸⁷ By technique of the self Foucault means

⁸² Ibid: 135

⁸³ Foucault, 1982: 777-778

⁸⁴ Penttinen, 2008: 16-17

⁸⁵ Penttinen, 2004: 93-95

⁸⁶ Foucault, 1982: 781

⁸⁷ Foucault, 1993: 203

*techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on.*⁸⁸

In my understanding this would allow a person to have two (or even more) different subject positions simultaneously. For example, a prostitute can become a subject through control and dependency by the client, but at the same time a prostitute can turn herself into a subject through techniques of the self such as self-knowledge. Following this, it can be investigated whether a woman who operates in the sex industry could in fact be a subject and abject at the same time. This observation is supported by MacLeod and Durrheim who point out that ‘power, in Foucauldian terms, does not mean disciplinary or repressive power only, but also liberatory power’. Power thus ‘coexists with resistances to it’.⁸⁹ This makes the study of power and subjectivity in the sex industry very interesting and challenging, as power relations and subject positions seem to depend on from whose point of view the situation is observed and how the people involved perceive their own position compared to how others may see it. The importance of liberatory power was extremely evident in the strip club where I conducted my field research. Hence it appears that by studying the Western and non-Western dancers and their customers at an upscale “gentlemen’s Clubs” one can break free and challenge the black and white –a woman in the sex industry is a powerless abject/object and the consumer the powerful subject– approach that has so far been commonly argued by author’s such as Penttinen. Of course one can assert that a normal “street prostitute” and an erotic dancer at a non-contact strip club are two very different things and cannot be put in the same category; however I argue that in fact this is exactly what should be done. For example, even if most of the girls working at the club are not prostitutes they are still being treated as such by the customers and the general public, which in turn affects their subjectification process. Moreover, the dancers are also in danger of sexual, mental and physical abuse and assault, just like prostitutes are.

2.5 c) Representation: the commodification of women

In her article “Empowerment/Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising” Rosalind Gill discusses the way in which the representation on women

⁸⁸ Ibid: 203

⁸⁹ MacLeod & Durrheim, 2002: 12

in advertising has changed in recent years. She argues that the advertisers now use female empowerment (understood in terms of sexual agency) as a tool for selling their products. These representations of empowerment can take different forms, such as the “midriff”, the “hot lesbian” and the “vengeful woman”.⁹⁰

The figure of the midriff represents the strong, independent, powerful and playful attractive young woman who is sexually confident and active and who seems to be ‘always up for it’.⁹¹ Gill explains that

*Where once sexualized representations of women in the media presented them as passive, mute objects of an assumed male gaze, today women are presented as active, desiring sexual subjects who choose to present themselves in a seemingly objectified manner because it suits their (implicitly ‘liberated’) interests to do so.*⁹²

However, in order to get what they want (a man) and to exercise their power, the women have to succumb to the stereotypical ideas of beauty in our societies. That is, they have to be slim yet curvy, young yet experienced, perfectly hairless, toned and ‘done up’ yet natural. The aim of all of this is to ‘attract male attention and sometimes female envy’.⁹³ Gill explains that ‘sexual subjectification, then, is a highly specific and exclusionary practice and sexual pleasure is actually irrelevant here; it is the power of sexual attractiveness that is important’. Hence, it appears that gaining agency is inextricably intertwined with appearance and consumerism.⁹⁴ Gill concludes by stating that the ‘midriff advertising involves a shift in the way that power operates: it entails a move from an external male-judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic one’⁹⁵. Moreover, ‘not only are women objectified (as they were before), but through sexual subjectification in midriff advertising they must also now understand their own objectification as pleasurable and self chosen’.⁹⁶

The vengeful woman seen in revenge adverts, in turn is all about the woman getting back at a man ‘in his own game’ and ‘turning the tables’. Gill argues that ‘she cannot really change things, but simply respond momentarily with an angry, vengeful gesture that may feel cathartic but leaves the status quo of gender relations intact’.⁹⁷ In other words, this kind of advertisement implies that the battle of the sexes is here to stay and all a woman can do is to win small fights - but never

⁹⁰ Gill, Rosalind, (2008) “Empowerment/Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising”, *Feminism Psychology*, Vol. 18, No. 35, p. 35

⁹¹ Ibid: 41

⁹² Ibid: 42

⁹³ Ibid: 43

⁹⁴ Ibid: 44

⁹⁵ Ibid: 45

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid: 47

the actual battle.⁹⁸ The third figure is the ‘hot lesbian’, which is normally presented in two different ways: either the two women are each others opposites i.e. a black girl with a white girl or a brunette with a blonde, or the women resemble each other i.e. acting out the ‘doubling’ fantasy of many men.⁹⁹ What is interesting about the hot lesbian figure in advertising is the ‘extraordinarily attractive, conventionally feminine appearance’ of the women.¹⁰⁰ The butch lesbians are not welcome, which indicates ‘that this figure is invariably constructed in relation to heterosexuality – not as an autonomous or independent sexual identity’.¹⁰¹

I see a strong correlation between all of these three figures and the way in which the women who work in the sex industry can feel empowered by what they do. This is especially so when it comes to erotic dancers in Britain, as erotic dancing has become very mainstream and elements of it are often used in advertising to sell products to females. The same can be said about women’s magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan*, and TV-shows, such as “How to look good naked”, “What not to wear” and “10 years younger” that reinforce the stereotypes discussed above.¹⁰² These magazines are full of articles about how women are allowed, or rather *should* be independent, strong and equal to men, (in the office, at the house and in the bedroom), when at the same time they are full of guidelines, helpful tips and adverts on how to achieve these things by looking as attractive as possible and by finding the perfect man. However, the magazines only give one model for attractiveness and one path that leads to happiness that everyone should follow.

This ideal female type is supported by the TV-programs that also send out the message that in order for women to reach their full potential in professional and personal life they have to look a certain way and they have to use their sexuality to get what they want. Here we thus have three different examples: advertising, women’s magazines and TV-programs, (all of which are products of neoliberal policies, norms, rules and values) of how 21st century female empowerment is closely associated with female heterosexuality and strict rules of appearance. I argue that this new form of empowerment has simply become just another “accepted truth” that has become immanent in the Western society that plays a crucial role in women’s subjectivation process, were they stay-at-home mums or erotic dancers. In reality, it is purely a clever new way to oppress women. It also demonstrates how ‘knowledge structure’, as understood by Susan Strange, functions in practice.

⁹⁸ Ibid: 49

⁹⁹ Ibid: 59

¹⁰⁰ Ibid: 50

¹⁰¹ Ibid: 51

¹⁰² I followed these TV-programs in England for years, and I know that they are also shown in many other countries.

Strange explains that ‘a knowledge structure determine what knowledge is discovered, how it is stored, and who communicates it by what means to whom and on what terms’.¹⁰³

2.6 Conclusion

To sum up, what I have tried to do in this theoretical framework is to explain what global neoliberal governance is by first looking at the overall system in which global neoliberal governance operates, that is, global political economy. The second step was to analyse the concept of global governance. This was done through the works of Hardt and Negri, Reid and Penttinen, amongst others. What was discovered was that although all of the aforementioned scholars appear to be talking about three different things – Empire, globalisation and global liberal governance – it could be argued that they are all actually referring to the same phenomenon, but just calling it by different names, or rather, putting it under a different umbrella. In my thesis I am using the term *global neoliberal governance*, as in my view it can combine the different elements of Empire, globalisation and global governance that all try to explain the multiple sides of the phenomenon that is at the core of my research topic.

The purpose of the third step was to bring things back to reality: to demonstrate to the the reader how global neoliberal governance functions on the ground through neoliberalist governmentality and bio-politics. What was discovered was that neoliberal governmentality is closely linked to the workings of the market and thus to consumerism. Individuals’ free choices over what to consume is the crucial thing that needs to be analysed and controlled –but controlled from a distance. This controlling from a distance is achieved by creating “regimes of truth” and “accepted knowledge” that steer the consumer to a decision that not only benefits him but also the system and thus the population as a whole. However, it is not simply the market logic that matters but an individual must also internalise liberal norms and values on how to live their lives “well”. And crucially, in order to work, governmentality and bio-politics must operate in a way that the individual believes that s/he is making all of his/her decisions out of free will, and thus they must also take responsibility for those decisions. It was also argued that another aspect of neoliberalist governance can be exposed through Galtung’s violence triangle. The way in which cultural and structural violence operate is closely connected to neoliberal values, norms and ideas.

¹⁰³ Strange, S, 1994:121 quoted in Youngs, 2000: 78

The final step then leads us to the “body” of an individual subject. The concepts of “subject” and “power” as understood by Foucault are discussed and the three ways in which an individual can become a subject are explained. Elina Penttinen’s understanding of the subject versus object within the global sex industry is examined and challenged. Moreover, it was discussed how the novel representation of women in advertising and different media forums in 21st century is seen as new form of female empowerment, however, it was argued that this empowerment could also be seen as a novel form of oppression and objectivation of women. It was also discovered that these representations play a crucial role in the commodification of women in the West.

The analytical power of this theoretical framework will be tested in the analysis section of this thesis. In other words, the aim of the analysis is to demonstrate, with the help of the theoretical tools discussed above, that there is a concrete connection between global neoliberal governance and the global sex industry. Furthermore, the implications of this connection will be analysed.

III The many faces of the Global Political Economy of Sex

The spread of capitalism, globalisation and various neoliberal policies across the globe have created a vicious perpetual state of competition in the global political economy.¹⁰⁴ Multinational companies, transnational corporations and states are constantly competing for their share of the global markets. In this environment sex has become commodified in various aspects of life ranging from sex trafficking through to mail-order brides. Sex is also an extremely powerful tool of marketing and advertising, which could be argued to reinforce sexism and gender inequality. This thesis argues that sex and ethnicised female bodies have become highly valued and important commodities in the embodied global political economy – in which the global neoliberal governance exercises its power – which in turn, contrary to popular belief, has stemmed female emancipation in the 21st century. The huge global sex industry is thus an essential bi-product of the growing global political economy. Consequently, some feminist scholars from various disciplines have phrased the global sex industry as “global political economy of sex”. Pettman explains that this term ‘brings together political economy and culture, material relations and representations’.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ I will use the term “*global* (instead of *international*) political economy” as international is often taken to refer to relations between states when the term global incorporates various relations between different kinds of social groups. Thus, in my opinion the term “global” encapsulates the truly global nature of the political economy.

¹⁰⁵ Pettman, J.J, “Body politics: international sex tourism”, *Third World Quarterly*, (1997) Vol. 18, No.1, p.96

This background chapter will attempt to show how the global sex industry and the global political economy are linked by looking in more detail at four different aspects of the sex industry; sex trafficking, prostitution, sex tourism and erotic dancing. By examining these interrelated aspects of the sex industry I wish to demonstrate how the global political economy and neoliberal governmentality are inherent in all of them and hence the term “global political economy of sex” is a valid and useful term that highlights the involvement of the global political economy and global neoliberal governance in the global sex industry. The chapter is thus separated into four parts that each examines one of the aforementioned aspects of the sex industry.

3.1 Sex trafficking

Human trafficking is a growing worldwide phenomenon that includes trafficking in women, men and children for the purposes of different forms of what can be called “modern-day slavery”.¹⁰⁶ These include sexual exploitation, mail-order brides, forced and bonded labour, adoption of children, domestic servitude and organ removal. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines the act of trafficking as follows:

*Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*¹⁰⁷

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that over 2,4 million people are trafficked annually for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, or for the combination of the two, with yearly profits amounting to approximately 32 billion US dollars.¹⁰⁸ It should be noted that this is just one estimate amongst many, as due to its illegal nature and the fact that human trafficking is often confused with smuggling and illegal immigration, there are no exact figures on how many people are being trafficked annually. Human trafficking is the third largest illegal trade after guns and drugs; it is however, a lot less risky than its counterparts. Thus it is considered as a “low risk - high gain” activity, which makes it very attractive to criminals.

¹⁰⁶ This term has become widely used by various NGOs, Intergovernmental Organisations and the media. It is difficult to pinpoint who first called human trafficking “a form of modern day slavery”.

¹⁰⁷ The United Nations Office on Crimes and Drugs, “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children”
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>

¹⁰⁸ The International Labour Organisation
[http://www.ilo.org/global/About the ILO/Media and public information/Feature stories/lang--en/WCMS_090351/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About%20the%20ILO/Media%20and%20public%20information/Feature%20stories/lang--en/WCMS_090351/index.htm)

Due to the fact that trafficking for the purposes of various forms of sexual exploitation amounts to a large number of the trafficking trade, the term “sex trafficking” surfaced alongside “human trafficking”. Sex trafficking is a truly global phenomenon: women are being trafficked from the developing countries into the United States, Canada, Japan and Western Europe to work in the sex industry. Trafficking also occurs within all the continents and countries. What is more, a report by the Interpol reveals that an increasing number of children are being trafficked within Asia, Africa and Central and Southern America to service the growing numbers of Western sex tourists.¹⁰⁹

In order to look at this phenomenon in more detail I will limit my discussion here to trafficking within Europe. In Europe women from Central and Eastern Europe are being trafficked to South, West and North of Europe due to various complex reasons. One popular argument is that globalisation is the root cause of trafficking. Mameli explains that:

*As markets have become more open and fluid through globalization processes in the 1990s, the mobility of sex workers in the European Union (EU) has increased dramatically, creating a migrant class of sex workers that can be found operating to some degree in any EU country.*¹¹⁰

Another aspect of globalisation is the technological revolution, which has enabled most people in the developed world to have access to the Internet. Traffickers and pimps use the Internet in various ways in recruiting and finding vulnerable women, in promoting sexual services to potential buyers, and in delivering the women to the buyers.¹¹¹ Other main reasons for trafficking are said to be the prevailing poverty, gender discrimination, lack of education, and the overall crumbling of women’s economic stability in Central and Eastern Europe. However, O’Connor and Healy argue that these factors only ‘create the conditions in which women are driven into the sex industry’. According to them, ‘male demand for a supply of women and children is the root cause of prostitution and trafficking’.¹¹² Donna Hughes explains that the demand side of sex trafficking is made up by ‘1) the men who buy commercial sex acts, 2) the exploiters, traffickers, pimps and brothel owners who make up the sex industry, 3) the states that are destination countries, and 4) the

¹⁰⁹ Interpol, fact sheet

<http://www.interpol.int/Public/ICPO/FactSheets/THB02.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Mameli, P, “Stopping the illegal trafficking of human beings. How transnational police work can stem the flow of forced prostitution”, *Crime, law and Social Change*, Vol. 38, 2002, p.70

¹¹¹ Hughes, D, M, “Globalization, Information Technology, and Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children”, *Rain and Thunder-A Radical Feminist Journal of Discussion and Activism*, Vol. 13, Winter 2001, (downloaded from <http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/pubtrfrep.htm> on 11.11.08)

¹¹² O’Connor, M & Healy, G, *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), “The Links between Prostitution and Sex Trafficking: A Briefing Handbook”*, 2006, p.6
<http://action.web.ca/home/catw/attach/handbook.pdf>

culture that tolerates or promotes sexual exploitation'.¹¹³ All of these components play a role in creating the demand for trafficked women. Moreover, all of these components could be argued to be part of, and influenced by, the global political economy.

The influence of the political economy is also visible in the counter-trafficking efforts of the EU. Goodey sees the way in which the EU has been dealing with sex trafficking problematic for the following reasons: 'First, it prioritizes the "criminal" and efforts to prosecute "him" successfully. Second, it focuses on the criminality of illegal immigration, and related aspect of prostitution, rather than the humanitarian aspect of these "crimes"'.¹¹⁴ Thus the fact that the EU member states place the sex trafficking victims in the categories of illegal immigration and transnational crime can be counter-productive. It is a known fact that many EU member states are struggling to cope with illegal immigration, it is thus no surprise that the women trafficked from outside the EU are often not treated as victims, but rather as criminals who must be sent back to their home countries.¹¹⁵ Therefore, the fight against organised crime and illegal immigration can overshadow the "victimhood" of the trafficked women, and the core reasons why the women are being trafficked in the first place, such as female poverty in the origin countries and male demand for women in the destination countries. Goodey argues that the EU should focus in equal measures to the prevention of trafficking, prosecution of traffickers and protection of trafficked women in their counter- trafficking activities.¹¹⁶

3.2 Prostitution

Prostitution exists in every corner of the globe and can take numerous forms, such as street prostitution, brothel- and massage/sauna parlour prostitution, escort prostitution, phone sex, internet prostitution and peep shows, or strip-club prostitution. It is often said that prostitution is as old as time and thus the world's oldest profession, so is it possible to see something novel in the way prostitution is currently operating around the world? Naturally states around the world view prostitution differently depending on what it means to them and how it is perceived in the society as a whole. Polar-opposite views could be said to exist, for example, between Sweden, Norway and Iceland, where the buying of sex has been criminalised and the selling of sex decriminalised; and,

¹¹³ Hughes, D, "The Demand for Victims of Sex Trafficking", June 2005, p. 7

http://www.uri.edu/artsci/wms/hughes/demand_for_victims.pdf

¹¹⁴ Goodey, J, Migration, Crime and Victimhood: Responses to Sex Trafficking in the EU, Punishment and Society, 2003, Vol. 5, p. 422

¹¹⁵ See for example, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2007/oct/04/ukcrime.prisonsandprobation>

¹¹⁶ Goodey, 2003: 422

for example, Thailand where prostitution is illegal but tolerated and regulated, and in the Netherlands where prostitution is legal.

Hence, one way to look at prostitution and how it is linked to the global political economy is to examine the reasons behind legalisation of prostitution. To put it simply, if prostitution is illegal, only the traffickers, pimps, brothel owners and corrupt officials benefit, but when it is made legal the state also gets its share of the cake in tax revenue as legitimate businesses can participate in the sex industry. Regrettably many Western European countries have legalised prostitution or they tolerate it, which enables them to get their share of the profits the multibillion-dollar sex industry generates. Naturally more state income can be seen as a positive thing especially if it used for redistributive purposes, however it should be asked whether it is ever acceptable for a state to make money out something that can be argued to be the world's oldest form of oppression of women. Moreover, legalisation often goes hand in hand with the culture that glamorises and normalises prostitution. It is promoted as an easy way to make money and even a way for women to empower themselves.¹¹⁷ Consequently, some women's rights groups, feminist scholars and international organisations, such as the ILO, are promoting the idea that prostitution should be seen as a normal profession.¹¹⁸ They argue that prostitutes should be called sex-workers and given the same rights as any other workers. In their view this would also make it easier to monitor prostitution and thus combat trafficking. However, this has not been the case in, for example, Germany. Prostitution is legal in Germany where 'an estimated 400,000 prostitutes serve 1.2 million men a day in an industry with an annual turnover of €14 billion (US\$18 billion). It is known that a significant percentage of the women in prostitution, and probably the majority, are trafficked from Eastern Europe.'¹¹⁹

The legalisation of prostitution is often promoted and legitimated by the fact that it is supposed to make the women who work in prostitution safer. It is argued that legalised prostitution will improve the lives of the prostitutes by getting rid of the stigma that is attached to it. This whole justification is built on the premise that prostitution is the world's oldest profession and is here to stay - thus we might as well make it legal. However, Farley states that, for example, in the Netherlands, where prostitution is legal, the women in prostitution have said that they do not feel better protected by the law nor do they feel that their health has improved since legalisation. The

¹¹⁷ Ibid: 8

¹¹⁸ See for example, articles by Jo Doezema and in Finland by Anna Kontula

¹¹⁹ Hughes, p.13

legalisation of prostitution does not stop the violence that these women often face, nor does it stop its numerous health effects. 'In fact, the law protects the privacy of pimps and generally represents the interests of johns'.¹²⁰ Moreover, in many countries where prostitution is decriminalised or legal, such as New Zealand, Nevada in the USA and Turkey, the state has agreed to 'zoning of the physical locations of sex businesses', which keeps prostitution away from ordinary peoples' neighbourhoods.¹²¹ This has also recently happened in Amsterdam's famous red-light district where the city officials are trying to "clean-out" the streets. Surely this does nothing to remove the stigma attached to prostitution.

The debate surrounding the legalisation of prostitution shows how states take political and economic aspects into consideration when passing new legislations. In other words, the global political economy has a definite influence on state behaviour. This comes as no surprise when one looks at the profits that can be made from the sex industry around the world. According to O'Connor & Healy 'the sex industry in the EU Member states has become one of the most lucrative businesses. In the Netherlands, where prostitution is legal, the sex industry generates almost US\$ 1 billion a year'.¹²² It is obvious then that numerous business owners, managers, individuals and governments benefit from the legalisation of prostitution and other associated aspects of the global sex industry, which in turn limits states' interests in criminalizing the use of prostitutes. O'Connor & Healy explain the issue as follows.

*In any system of legalised or regulated prostitution the State is benefiting financially from the sexual exploitation of women and girls. The collusion and lack of political will by states to create adequate laws and ensure police enforcement give legal permission to exploit and make the sexual violence against women invisible.*¹²³

Enriquez argues that in Thailand the profits made from the sex industry 'represent a value equal to around 60 per cent of the government budget'. In Korea, profits from sex industry account for 4.4% of the national GDP, which 'was the same as the profits from agriculture and fishery industry'. Furthermore, the growing pornography/cybersex industry generates billions of US dollars annually. Enriquez also points out that 'the militarization of countries by US forces'

¹²⁰ Farley, Melissa, "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized", Violence Against Women, October 2004, p. 1089-1090

¹²¹ Ibid: 1092-1093

¹²² O'Connor, M & Healy, G, 2006: 25

¹²³ Ibid: 24

still creates huge demand for prostitutes. For example, ‘in Korea alone, 5000 Filipinos and even more Russian women are in prostitution around US military bases’.¹²⁴

As Winberg proclaims, ‘it is not acceptable for States that call themselves democratic to legalise men’s sexual exploitation of women’.¹²⁵ If legalisation is the example the state is setting then it is no wonder the sex industry has grown as much as it has, and that there are still people out there who think prostitution is like any other job and that women would choose prostitution even if they had another option. Ekberg hits the nail on the head by stating that, ‘if men did not take for granted that they have the explicit right to buy and sexually exploit women and girls, the trade in females would not exist’.¹²⁶ It is statements like these that are often interpreted as standpoint feminism – which they are for sure by current “accepted knowledge” – however there is a legitimate message behind them that have the power to change things. This is also a good example of what I meant earlier when I was discussing the negative connotation of the word feminism. If normal people, scholars, politician and so forth that make statements like this are labeled as feminists they can by some miracle be ignored and often even snarled at. Instead what should happen is that *everyone* should start to make statements like this and consequently turn this kind of thinking into new accepted knowledge.

3.3 Sex tourism

The Internet and the ease of international air travel have had a huge impact on the growth of international tourism. Sex tourism in turn could be said to be an underground industry of normal tourism. There are now numerous organised “sex trips” that take Western men to locations where they can buy cheap sex from local exotic women, girls and boys. Men can easily find information on the countless internet sites advertising good sex tourism destinations.¹²⁷ One can also find discussion forums where men can post their comments on their experiences about various destinations.¹²⁸ There are also websites that focus on helping the Western men find a wife from abroad.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Enriques, 2006: 4-5

¹²⁵ Cited in O’Connor and Healy (2006: 26)

¹²⁶ Ibid: 10

¹²⁷ See for example <http://www.pleasuretours.com/> and <http://thailand.clubhombre.com/>

¹²⁸ See for example <http://ns3.wsarchives.com/main.html>

¹²⁹ See for example <http://www.pleasuretours.com/lovesearchtours/>

A popular destination for sex tourism has been Asia. Pettman argues that this could partly be explained by the fact that ‘media images, tourist brochures and airline advertising like the “Singapore girl” associate the Asian woman with male adventure and female availability’.¹³⁰ Furthermore, according to Pettman the popularity of Asia could be seen in terms of the colonial history of the West with Asia: ‘Dominant group men’s access to the bodies of subordinated, colonised or slave women was part of the privilege of power.’ Moreover, ‘receiving states are feminised, and along with women are aligned with nature, receptivity, and sexual allure and danger.’¹³¹

Gupta rationalises that as the ‘new world of globalisation’ has made everything marketable, ‘countries are actually promoting some of their cities as sex tourism sites’.¹³² Women have become commodities that can be used to entice tourists. Pettman argues that the reasons why some poorer countries are promoting tourism as a “development strategy” is because of the ‘growing indebtedness, trade liberalisation and pressure from the World Bank and IMF to “open up the economy”’.¹³³ Enriquez agrees by arguing as follows:

*The most recent General Agreement on Trade in Services within WTO agreements provides for liberalization of tourism. As such, the unbridled investment in this sector has been and will continue to use women as exploitative “resources” in the tourism industry being sold to tourists.*¹³⁴

It could be argued then that sex industry forms an important part of the huge international hospitality and leisure business, which is integral to the economic growth of many businesses and countries. Increased demand for workers in the sex industry obviously creates the need for more supply, hence encouraging not only the “voluntary” movement of women to work as prostitutes and exotic dancers, but it also fuels the trafficking in women.

Pettman argues that in order to uncover the politics behind “the body” in international sex tourism one must ask questions about the ‘relations between sex and power, men and women, first and third worlds, and sexual relations across state, national, racialised and culturalised

¹³⁰ Pettman Pettman, J.J. An International Political Economy of Sex? In Kofman, E and Youngs, *Practice Globalisation: Theory and Practice*, (London: Pinter, 1998), p. 199

¹³¹ Pettman, J.J. ‘Body Politics: International sex tourism’, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1997), p. 97

¹³² Gupta, R & Agheteste, E & Santos, A & DeTroy, C, In an interview by Pamela Shifman, ‘Trafficking and women’s human rights in a globalised world’, *Gender and Development*, Vol. 11, No. 1, May 2003, p. 127

¹³³ Pettman, 1997: 96

¹³⁴ Enriquez, J, ‘Globalization, Militarism and Sex Trafficking’, 10 Nov 2006, p. 4
http://sisyphe.org/article.php3?id_article=2475

boundaries'.¹³⁵ Truong agrees by stating that 'the emergence of tourism and sex-related entertainment is an articulation of a series of unequal social relations including North-South relations, relations between capital and labour, male and female, production and reproduction'.¹³⁶ Sex tourism and mail-order brides operate in the shadows of globalisation and international tourism, and hence are very much part of the global political economy.

3.4 Erotic dancing

Unlike often assumed by the public, erotic dancing is not a homogeneous field of the sex industry. Its meaning varies from one country to the next and from one club to the next. It covers a wide variety of services, such as pole-dancing shows, striptease, lap-dancing, and more explicit sexual acts. Many strip-clubs in, for example, the USA are non-contact clubs, which means that the customer and the dancer are not allowed to have any physical contact with each other. This rule means that the clubs are by law part of the "entertainment industry" – instead of the sex industry. The same rule also applies to many clubs in Europe; however it is widely known that many clubs do not adhere to this rule. For example, the British parliament is currently reviewing a legislation that would reclassify the status of lap-dancing clubs from "entertainment venues" to "sex establishments".¹³⁷ This would enable the British government to regulate the strip-club industry more strictly. A manager of one lap-dancing club in an English seaside-town told me that it would basically mean that the government would impose a heavy tax on the clubs and impose various rules and controlling mechanisms on the clubs.

However, exotic clubs around the world are often just a front for prostitution and other associated activities that take place either on the premises or the customer can take the woman to a nearby hotel or other "safe" location. For example, it is a known fact that many British men go on stag weekends to cities in Eastern and Central Europe specifically because the lap-dancing clubs there are more "liberal". One British man told me that he ended up having sex with a dancer at a strip-club in Prague. He told me that they went to a private room first for a dance, and then the girl asked if he wanted to pay more for "extras", which in this case meant oral sex and intercourse. As Farley proclaims:

People often assume that prostitution does not occur in strip clubs. Yet the lines between prostitution and other sexually exploitive activities such as stripping have

¹³⁵ Pettman, 1997: 93

¹³⁶ Cited in Pettman 1997: 96

¹³⁷ <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/policingandcrime.html>

*become increasingly blurred. The amount of physical contact between customers and women who strip has escalated since 1980, along with an increase in sexual harassment and physical assault. Touching, grabbing, pinching, and fingering of dancers removes any boundaries between dancing, stripping, and prostitution.*¹³⁸

What is more, even in clubs that have the non-contact rule, the bouncers cannot fully protect the women if the customer wishes to touch them.

Erotic clubs thus play a central role in the global political economy of sex because they act as the facilitators for prostitution, sex trafficking and sex-tourism by often providing the façade for these activities. It should be noted, however, that pure erotic dancing (that doesn't involve physical contact) can also be seen to represent a different variation of commodification of women within the global political economy than, for example, prostitution. Danielle Egan explains that 'the commodified relationships that occur within an exotic dance club are sexually charged interactions between a customer who buys time, personal contact and erotic fantasy from an exotic dancer'. Egan calls this interaction "emotional consumption".¹³⁹ Moreover, erotic dancing has also become a very fashionable and desired job in, for example, the UK, where many dancers view themselves as empowered entertainers, dancers, and performers who capitalise on their sexual power over men. I will discuss this novel phenomenon that is fuelled by the media and popular culture more in the analysis chapter, which focuses on erotic dancing.

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude I wish to draw from Elina Penttinen's research on globalisation and the sex industry, as this nicely sums up the different linkages between the sex industry and the global political economy that I have attempted to highlight thus far. For Penttinen, the global sex industry represents the shadow landscape, *the sexscape*, of each of Appadurai's different and intertwined landscapes of globalisation, which he names as the *ethnoscapes* (the movement of people), *mediascapes* (the development of the global media), *technoscapes* (the advances in technology), *financescapes* (the movement of money and the development of global capital) and *ideoscapes* (spread of ideologies such as neoliberalism, democracy, freedom etc).¹⁴⁰ The sexscape has been able to grow thanks to neoliberal policies such as economic restructuring and 'libertarian ideologies

¹³⁸ Farley, 2004: 1102

¹³⁹ Egan, R. D, "Emotional Consumption: Mapping Love and Masochism in an Exotic Dance Club", *Body and Society* (2005), Vol. 11, No. 4, p. 87

¹⁴⁰ Penttinen, E, *Globalization, Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking, Corporeal politics*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p 39-52

that justify the commercialization and commonification of individual bodies and which follow gender and ethnic lines in defining the consumers and the consumable'.¹⁴¹

These sexscapes represent the way in which the global sex industry as a whole operates. For example, when a woman is trafficked into a country she is there illegally and should remain invisible, thus she belongs to the shadow sexscape of the ethnoscapes. The shadow sexscape of technoscapes can be found on the Internet and in the disappearance of distances, which has resulted in the increase in sex tourism. Sex trafficking and prostitution are huge businesses in which great profits can be made as the criminal gangs and procurers can move and launder money in the shadow economy of the financescape. Moreover, the illegal and legal sex trades are closely connected and contribute to the formal economy. Lastly, the libertarian ideologies that legitimise the commercialisation of sex can be seen as inherently sexist and racist and thus as forming the shadow sexscape of the ideoscapes.¹⁴²

This chapter has attempted to give a brief overview of the global sex industry and how its expansion into a complex global web is closely connected with the workings of the global political economy and neoliberal globalisation. Thus, I argue that in order to even begin to understand and combat the growth of the global sex industry, researchers, policy-makers and the media alike should recognise and challenge the inherently unequal and gendered nature of the global political economy.

IV On methodology – an ethnographic case study

4.1 The case study: A Gentlemen's Club in the United Kingdom

I chose to focus my research to the world of erotic dancing for three main reasons. Firstly, considering that most of the other aspects of the sex industry (prostitution, sex trafficking and sex tourism) often operate underground and are illegal, I found that erotic dancing is the best focus for my research as it is the easiest one to gain access to. In order to see below the surface of the sex industry and to find the individuals who engage in it, I felt that doing an ethnographic case study was the best option. Moreover, due to the limitations of this thesis it would have been

¹⁴¹ Ibid: 56

¹⁴² Ibid: 41-50

impossible to gather meaningful data from all of the different aspects of the sex industry. Thus, in order to acquire good and purposeful empirical evidence for my theoretical arguments, I felt that I should limit my research to one specific area. Secondly, I chose this particular club because I have contacts inside the club, and I have visited the club several times when I lived in Brighton. This personal connection helped me to gain access to the club and to be accepted by the dancers, which made it much easier to conduct my research. However, when I requested permission from the management to interview the dancers and to spend time at the club, they only allowed me to enter after I had promised I would not reveal the name or the exact location of the club in my thesis. Thirdly, the fact that certain aspects of erotic dancing have entered the mainstream culture and society in many Western countries makes it a very interesting and novel field to research. For example, in the United Kingdom, erotic dancing is often associated with the entertainment industry, instead of the sex industry. Furthermore, pole-dancing has become an extremely popular sport in the UK, which has helped to remove the stigma attached to erotic dancing and stripping. Consequently part of my research focused on finding out what effect this “mainstreaming” has had on how the dancers perceive themselves and also how the customers see the industry.

The club I conducted my research in is part of a worldwide U.S. chain of gentlemen's clubs. The club prides itself as being “one of America's top Gentlemen's clubs featuring the most beautiful ladies around the world”. The club's website claims that they are devoted “to creating a collection of up-scale clubs unlike any other in the world”. The same theme is adopted in the clubs around the world. The term “gentlemen's club” is used to distinguish the club from “ordinary” strip-clubs. When I spoke with the bouncers and management of the club they confirmed that they would prefer to only have well-dressed, affluent, well-behaved “gentlemen” as customers. However, they also admitted that in reality, in order to stay in business, this is often simply not possible. The customers also include both single women and couples. It is also a popular destination for both bachelor and bachelorette parties. The club offers pole-dancing shows and both nude and semi-nude lap dancing. They also offer a service where a customer can buy the dancer's time, instead of dances. For example, if the customer wants to spend his entire evening with one girl, he pays approximately 1000 pounds and gets in return the undivided attention of the girl of his choice, a private area where they can chat and where the girl can dance for the man as many times as he wishes, and a bottle of champagne or vodka.

The club has a strict non-contact policy, which means that it does not allow any physical contact between the dancers and customers. There are security cameras everywhere and

countless bouncers are constantly scanning the floor and making sure the men do not try to touch the girls. Due to the law on erotic dancing in the UK the club cannot offer fully private lap-dancing e.g. behind closed doors. Hence, all the dancing happens in the main room, albeit the lap-dancing is performed on the more private balconies behind curtains that are only partially see-through. The club has two floors, which both have a bar, one main stage for pole-dancing shows and balcony areas for lap-dancing.

I used several specific ethnographic fieldwork methods to gather data, such as interviews, conversations and observations, during four different nights at the club in October 2009. I was told that the clientele and atmosphere is very different depending on the night, thus I chose to visit the club during busy Friday and Saturday nights, as well as during quieter week nights. My initial plan was to conduct one-to-one face-to-face interviews with both the dancers and customers and to record them all as well. I was also planning on asking the questions in the same order and in the same way each time. However, the reality was slightly more complicated. I managed to only record four interviews with the dancers and none with the customers. Even if I tried to reassure them that the interviews are totally anonymous and confidential, most of the girls didn't want to speak on tape. Moreover, I did not manage to ask all of the questions from all of the customers I spoke with due to various reasons that I will discuss further later on.

I interviewed eight girls in total on one-to-one basis, however in total I spoke with approximately 20 dancers. This was due to the fact that when a word got out of my doing research, the girls actually approached me, wanting to tell their story. Often more girls also joined in midway through a conversation and I ended up listening to many group discussions where the girls debated my questions. I found that probably due to my age, gender and contacts inside the club, the girls often talked to me like to a friend, and at times I found myself engaged in so-called girl-talk. Consequently, it was sometimes hard to try and stay objective, distant and professional, and to remember that I was actually conducting research! I will discuss this issue of my own subject position in more detail in the following chapter. A further difficulty was that I was unable to record most of the interviews and conversations, which meant that I had to make mental notes of the things the dancers said and write them up later.

Interviewing the customers was much more challenging than interviewing the dancers. First of all, the management was not very supportive of me harassing the customers with questions and distracting them from spending money on the girls. Thus, I had to conduct my interviews rather

discreetly, which meant I wasn't able to record them or make notes of them then and there. I found myself spending considerable time in the ladies toilet writing up the interviews. Secondly, during nights when the club wasn't busy I didn't want to steal the customers away from the girls because I knew this would upset the girls. Thirdly, often when I was talking to a customer one of the girls would come and join in on the conversation (especially if I had already interviewed them) and try to get the customer to buy a dance. The girls often used me and my research as a way to get a customer to buy a dance. They would say things like: "Lets go and have a dance and then you can tell her (me) all about it". Fourthly, due to my gender and age the men often tried to flirt with me and hit on me. Hence, at times it was rather difficult to get the men to take my questions seriously. However, I also think that my gender and age helped me to build rapport with some of the customers. I found that both the older and younger men were often willing to talk to me even about some very personal issues. Consequently, there were times when I felt more like a psychiatrist than a researcher! I also quickly discovered that I could use my gender and age to my advantage to get the customers to answer my questions. Hence, I was an active participant in the way in which I was perceived and received by the customers. I will discuss this issue of "deploying gender" as a way to gain access and rapport in fieldwork further in the following section.¹⁴³ Fifthly, most of the men at the club were under the influence of alcohol and other intoxicating substances, which made the interviewing at times challenging.

In the end I discovered a good strategy for speaking with the customers without upsetting neither the management nor the girls. I would sit at the bar and wait for the customers to come and order drinks. Then as they were waiting to be served I would start a conversation with them, and ask them a few questions without anyone noticing. Due to all of the above factors, the conversations I had with the customers are all suggestive and open to interpretation. I do, however, think that I managed to obtain some very interesting and important data from the customers exactly due to the the informal setting.

When I wasn't talking with the dancers, customers or other staff at the club I tried to carefully observe what was happening around me. Again, due to the setting in which I was in I was unable to record my observations then and there. Thus, my strategy was to observe a certain aspects of, for example, interaction between a specific dancer and a customer, and then write about it later. I also observed the general workings of the club in order to produce a step-by-step account of what

¹⁴³ Mazzei, J& O'Brien E.E, "You Got It, So When Do You Flaunt It? Building Rapport, Intersectionality, and the Strategic Deployment of Gender in the Field", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 38, No. 3, June 2009

usually happens from the time when the customer enters the club to the time he leaves. I did the same with the dancers in order to get a better understanding of what a normal shift is like for them. I wanted to see if there was a certain routine or a process of how a “normal woman” transforms herself into an erotic dancer. I also noticed that I started to see things differently, or rather learned to look for certain things in the behaviour of both the dancers and the customers, as I got more accustomed to being in the club and had learned more about it by talking to the dancers. This process of getting used to my surroundings took a couple of hours due to the fact that the first time one enters this type of establishment one can experience something that is nothing short of a culture shock. As I already mentioned, I had visited the club before when I lived in England, but this was over a year ago, and thus it took me a while to get used to being surrounded by half naked women and men who were acting rather differently than what I am accustomed to, not to mention seeing the fully naked lap-dances taking place only a few meters from me. Hence, it was only after I grew “numb” to the nudity and to the unusual interaction between the dancers and the customers, that I was able to start to analytically make observations about what was going on in the club.

4. 2 Ethnography: field work and participant observation

Ethnography is a type of qualitative research that often utilises various methods, such as fieldwork and participant observation. It originated from anthropology where it was used to “study the unknown”, such as cultures and social processes that were previously undiscovered. This process of discovery requires in depth study of a given sample, which means that the researcher is likely to spend considerable time in the field studying the behaviour of the sample in their “natural settings”, in other words, the researcher will “go native”. Ethnography was also deployed by the sociologists of the Chicago school who believed that academics should leave their dusty offices and libraries and go and study things in the “real world”.¹⁴⁴ Feminist ethnography in International Relations in turn “has opened a field of opportunities for researching phenomena that have hitherto been marginalized in traditional social science and mainstream IR, such as feelings, perceptions, fears, and emotions, the real core of human existence”.¹⁴⁵

In my research I engaged in fieldwork, which quite simply ‘is the term used in qualitative research to cover the data-collection phase when the investigators leave their desks and

¹⁴⁴ Gilbert, N (ed.), *Researching Social Life*. 3rd edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), p. 267-269

¹⁴⁵ Jacoby, T, “From the trenches: dilemmas of feminist IR fieldwork” in Ackerly, B.A, Stern, M and True, J, *Feminist Methodologies for International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.155

go out into the field'. Usually anthropologists and sociologists who do traditional ethnographic fieldwork end up spending long time periods with the people they are studying. Anthropologist may spend two years or more in "total immersion", that is, living with the subjects they are studying; when sociologists normally only visit the site on a daily basis for a certain duration thus engaging in "partial immersion".¹⁴⁶ My own fieldwork was partial immersion and obviously done on a much smaller time scale due to the nature of the study.

Jacoby explains that feminist International Relations researchers have used fieldwork as a way of 'translating experience into knowledge'.¹⁴⁷ Tickner specifies that feminist scholars attempt to 'challenge and rethink what is claimed to be "knowledge", from the perspective of women's lives'.¹⁴⁸ In my study I will attempt to analyse the experiences and beliefs of the dancers and the customers in order to investigate whether and how the knowledge of the dancers varies and is different to that of the customers. In other words, I will investigate the phenomenon of erotic dancing from the perspectives of both the dancers and the customers and I will attempt to analyse whether we can discover something general about the global political economy of sex, global neoliberal governance and gender inequality in these particular individual experiences.

It should be noted though that the way in which feminist social science research tends to take women's talk about their experiences at face value has been highly debated by the positivist and postmodern social scientists. The positivists argue that 'a great deal of what people say about their lives and experiences is (either deliberately or inadvertently) at variance with the facts'. Postmodernism in turn 'disputes the possibility of uncovering "facts", "realities", or "truths" behind the talk, and treats as inappropriate any attempt to vet what people say for its "accuracy", "reliability", or "validity"'. Feminist scholars have been criticised for not recognising that 'experience is never "raw", but is embedded in a social web of interpretation and re-interpretation'.¹⁴⁹ I do agree with these arguments to a certain degree; however I do still think that studying individual experiences "from the horse's mouth" is still a valuable source of information in social sciences. Moreover, the fact that experiences are always constructed according to the social environment and discourse, does not render these experiences obsolete, but rather could be seen as a way to learn something about the society and how people are governed. Penttinen articulated this by asserting that as the 'personal is constructed in relation to the cultural setting' it is 'then in relation

¹⁴⁶ Seale, C, Gobo, G, Gubrium, J and Silverman, D, *Qualitative Research Practice*, (Sage Publications, 2004), p. 206

¹⁴⁷ Jacoby in Ackerly et.al 2006: 153

¹⁴⁸ Tickner, J.A in Ackerly et.al. 2006: 21

¹⁴⁹ Seale et.al., 2004: 116

to the public, and not categorically separate from it'.¹⁵⁰ Hence, it should be possible to discover something about the public by studying the personal and vice versa.

When I was conducting my interviews there were indeed times when I felt that the dancers and customers might have been withholding information or twisting the truth. For example, when I asked the dancers if they had ever gone home with a customer to perform sexual favours for money, they all denied personally having done so, but at the same time they told me that they know other girls who do do it. It is thus possible that some of the girls I spoke with did not tell me the whole truth, considering that I spoke with over 20 girls. Same thing applies when I asked the customers if they would be willing to pay for sex. Both the dancers and the customers might have been too scared to tell me the truth, considering that soliciting is against the club's rules and the girls would get fired and the customers kicked out and barred if the managers would find out that they were engaged in soliciting. Another option is that due to the persistent stigma attached to prostitution, the dancers and the customers might have been too embarrassed to tell me the truth. This brings me to the practical issues of how to carry out ethnographic fieldwork.

There are two different ways of conducting ethnographic field work: Consent research means that the researchers makes his or her intentions known to the objects of the study, when covert fieldwork means that the researcher works under cover. Covert observation is often used when the group is hostile towards research or it would otherwise be impossible to gain access to the group without deception. However, covert observation is a highly debated method as it poses some very serious ethical dilemmas.¹⁵¹ My own study has elements of both methods. I openly told all the dancers and customers whom I spoke with that I was doing research for my Master's thesis. However, when I was doing observations I was also observing customers whom with I did not speak, and thus I do not have consent from all of the people I observed. I believe that in this case the covert observations were warranted as no harm can come to those whom I observed thorough this study. Moreover, Gilbert argues that 'in reality, overt and covert approaches shade into each other, so the most observational research involves a "delicate combination of overt and covert roles"'.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Penttinen, E, *Corporeal Globalization: Narratives of Subjectivity and Otherness in the Sexscapes of Globalization*, (Tampereen yliopistopaino Oy Juvenus Print: Tampere, 2004), p. 58

¹⁵¹ Gilbert (ed.) 2008: 271

¹⁵² Ibid: 272

My main method for collecting data is participant observation, which is ‘used to cover a mixture of observations and interviewing...So “participant” does not mean doing what those being observed do, but interacting with them while *they* do it’.¹⁵³ In theory there are three ways of recording the observations: mental notes, jotted notes and full field notes.¹⁵⁴ In practice I found myself making it up as I went along. I have never written field notes before, so I am not even sure if what I have produced is correct. I tried to make notes as often as possible, but due to the nature of the setting, it was not possible for me to write notes as I was doing the observations.

Analysing observations is not an easy task. In order to theorise and analyse what I saw I think that the best analytical tool is provided by autoethnography, that is, by writing ‘subjective and situated narratives’.¹⁵⁵ Penttinen explains that ‘the narrative turn is a means by which the researcher can be open about the context and situatedness of the knowledge produced and about her own biases and values that she brings into the text.’¹⁵⁶ This narrative turn is part of autoethnography, which allows the researcher to write their observations and experiences in a form of personal stories. It ‘rests on the assumption that it is possible to learn about the general through the particular and therefore writing individual experience is also about writing social experience’.¹⁵⁷ The narrative turn allows me to recognise that the lines between objective and subjective knowledge are blurred when conducting this type of research, moreover it allows me to take into consideration my own political and ethical position when analysing the observations.

The other aspect of participant observation I used was interviewing the informants face-to-face in their natural setting. I used both unstructured and semi-structured, open-ended interviews. The interviews with the dancers were more structured than the interviews with the customers, for reasons already discussed in this chapter. Semi-structured interview type allowed me the freedom to improvise during the interviews and for example ask further question if the informant said something interesting. Moreover, even though I had an interview guide I did not have it in front of me when conducting the interviews. I memorised the questions and asked them in the order and wording that seemed appropriate with each informant.¹⁵⁸ I chose the sample based on various factors: With the dancers I wanted to interview girls from as many different countries as possible to get a better understanding of whether and how the intersections of race, class, age and

¹⁵³ Seale et.al. 2004: 206

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert, 2008: 273

¹⁵⁵ Penttinen, 2004: 58

¹⁵⁶ Ibid: 62

¹⁵⁷ Ibid: 58

¹⁵⁸ Davies, Charlotte, (1999) *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, Routledge, p. 95

gender plays a role in the dancers experiences. When it came to interviewing the customers, I tried to speak with men (and female customers too) from different age groups and backgrounds. I also had many unstructured and informal group conversations with both the dancers and the customers. This allowed me observe the interaction between the informants. During the group discussions it was extremely hard to stay objective and distant as the informants often asked for my opinion on things and thus made me an active participant in the conversation.

Consequently, during the interviews and conversations I found myself adopting different roles and acting in different ways when speaking with the men and the women. At first I did this subconsciously and just interpreted it as using my people skills to build rapport with the informants. However, as I read Mazzei and O'Brien's article on strategic deployment of gender in the field, I realised that I was doing exactly that. They argue that,

*...gaining access and establishing rapport are often dependent on a researcher's ability to first recognize and then strategically work within the socially constructed meanings that define all her physical and social characteristics deemed relevant by her particular field setting.*¹⁵⁹

I, for instance, deployed my gender, age and nationality in different ways depending on with whom I was talking, in other words, I strategically and interactively renegotiated my identity and gender to build rapport and gain trust with the informants. For example, when I was speaking with the customers I would not reveal what I really thought of them, or of some of the rather rude and degrading things they said about the dancers. I tried my best to keep my reactions completely neutral and unbiased. I didn't take anyone's side or judge anyone, even when prompted to do so. Instead I would play along with the customer, laugh at their jokes, nod approvingly and encourage them to tell me more. In Mazzei and O'Brien's view this is a perfectly ethical way of building access and rapport as long as the researcher does not "betray self", put herself in danger, or neither manipulate nor harm the informants.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, I would argue that in the specific field setting that I was in, deploying my gender was a key element in conducting my research.

When I was conducting the face-to-face interviews with the dancers I also did my best to stay completely neutral, un-biased and un-judgmental. Instead, I would again smile and nod and encourage the dancers to talk to me openly and freely. This is why I didn't try to force the girls to

¹⁵⁹ Mazzei & O'Brien, 2009: 359–360

¹⁶⁰ Ibid: 378

talk to the recorder when they expressed their concerns about their interviews being on record. The next step is thus to analyse the data I collected. Davies argues that,

*Ethnographic analysis involves a constant and hopefully creative tension between the necessary, if risky, process of generalizing and explaining, and ethnographic knowledge of real people, their actions and interactions gleaned through the experiences of field research.*¹⁶¹

My aim is then to try to find information, patterns, similarities and differences in my data to suggest some generalisation about the phenomenon of erotic dancing and how it is linked to the global political economy and global neoliberal governance. Moreover, I will attempt to find evidence and examples of the processes of subjectivation, objectivation and commodification in the experiences and actions of the dancers and the customers. The clearest way to do this, in my opinion, is to follow the four steps I laid out in my theory and carefully “test my theory” in the analysis.

As I already had my theoretical argument roughly in place before I started the fieldwork, I followed what is called “sequential analysis”, ‘in which one continually checks data against interpretation until satisfied one has grasped meaning’. This means that the data collection process is not static, but instead the continuous analysis whilst collecting the data can steer further data collection to a new direction and cause the researcher to abandon or adopt new theoretical categories along the way.¹⁶² This is something that indeed happened during my field research as the interviews and observation did prompt me to rethink certain aspects of my initial theory and research focus. By this I mainly mean the process of becoming a subject, object or an abject and the discovery that one can have more than one subject positions simultaneously. My overall argument and stand was from the beginning that global neoliberal governance acts as the facilitator and maintainer of the global sex industry and gender inequality and that it takes nothing short of what one might call “standpoint-feminism” to change that. However, my point is that we need to get rid of the label of feminism as I think that it is counterproductive to its cause.

In conclusion I wish to reiterate that I am fully aware of the criticisms and challenges of feminist ethnographic research. I know that this type of research is not very common, well received, or accepted in the mainstream International Relations debates, theories or methods. In fact many would argue that studying the sex industry is something completely outside the sphere of IR. However, as already mentioned, one aim of this thesis is to push the boundaries of IR theoretically,

¹⁶¹ Davies, 1999: 193-194

¹⁶² Gilbert, 2008: 280

methodologically and practically. I wish to demonstrate that these individual experiences of erotic dancers in England can tell us something general about many aspects of International Relations - whether these relations are relations between states, ethnic groups, races, men and women or simply individuals.

V Analysis

5.1 Signs of embodied Global Political Economy and Neoliberal Governance inside a Strip club

5.1 a) Location, location, location

On my first night at the club it very soon became clear to me that the dancers represented almost all corners of the world. I spoke with girls from Asia, North America, Europe and Africa. What is interesting here is that the dancer's reasons for working at the club varied drastically depending on where they were from. The nationality, race and ethnicity of the dancers also determined the attitude and behaviour of the staff and the customers towards the dancers. Furthermore, the nationality of the dancers seemed to divide the dancers into different camps amongst each other. For example, all the British dancers preferred to only interact with other Brits or North Americans, and the Eastern European and Russian girls tended to form a group of their own. There was also a great deal of collective animosity towards some dancers from, for example, South East Asia or Africa. This begs the questions why do the dancers' nationality, race and ethnicity play such a multifaceted role in the club?

Firstly, I wanted to find out why so many of the dancers come from less developed countries. Did they come to the UK wanting to be erotic dancers or did they end up working at the club because of other reasons? As Linda McDowell points out, one obvious reason for economic migrations is the difference in income levels and employment opportunities in different countries and regions around the world.¹⁶³ This is evident in the club when one places the countries where the women come from on the 2010 Global Gender Gap report. For example, Poland ranks on 43rd place in the report, Romania on 67th place, Slovakia on 71st and most African, Middle Eastern and Asian

¹⁶³ Linda McDowell: Thinking through work: complex inequalities, constructions of difference and trans-national migrants, *Progress in Human Geography* 32(4) (2008), p. 495

countries rank even worse. In comparison the big receiving countries of immigrants such as Sweden, Spain, Germany and United Kingdom rank on places 4, 11, 13 and 15.¹⁶⁴ It is thus no wonder many women from these countries are tempted –or even forced– to migrate to the West. Thus, the next question to ask is why and how do they end up working in the sex industry?

McDowell argues that ‘unlike capital, labour is neither free to move across borders, nor undifferentiated. Labour is differentiated by age, skills, skin colour and gender and is selected and directed into particular slots in the labour markets of receiving countries’.¹⁶⁵ Consequently immigrants often find themselves in low paid and low skilled work regardless of their educational or social background in their home countries. In fact, McDowell argues that this is due to deliberate immigrations policies that limit the options of employment for immigrants to these jobs.¹⁶⁶ According to McDowell UK is currently exercising “managed migration”, which divides the immigrants into two categories: the highly educated and highly skilled who are seen as ‘valuable social capital’ and the ‘low-skilled rump of undifferentiated “warm bodies” for bottom-end jobs with far fewer rights in the UK’.¹⁶⁷

Most of the dancers at the club who were economic immigrants belonged to - not surprisingly - the second category. They told me that they rather work as strippers than nannies or waitresses because they could earn ten times more as erotic dancers. Interestingly though, I also spoke with many University educated women from both the West and the developing world, who told me that they had to come and work at the club because they were unable to find well paid employment in their own fields neither in the UK nor in their home countries. This could be partly explained by what McDowell calls “gendered patters” of work in the UK. In other words, female migrants often end up working in jobs that are seen as “women’s jobs”, such as nurses and nannies. According to McDowell this categorising is linked to the women’s ‘social class, nationality and stereotypical national attributes, both “here” and “there” that become institutionalized in the labour market through segregation and segmentation’.¹⁶⁸ McDowell elaborates this point as follows.

Institutional structures and regulations and everyday practices position in-migrants as workers (and potential citizens) of differential worth. It is clear that constructions of difference –whether based on class, race, nationality, language or skin colour – are produced and maintained through practices that operate at and across different spatial

¹⁶⁴ Hausmann, Ricardo, Tyson, Laura D & Zahidi, Saadia, ”The Global Gender Report 2010”, World Economic Forum Geneva, Switzerland 2010, p. 10-11

¹⁶⁵ Ibid: 495

¹⁶⁶ Ibid: 495

¹⁶⁷ Ibid: 495

¹⁶⁸ Ibid: 496

*scales. These practices include ideological assumptions, multiple regulatory systems, structures of power and domination and spoken and enacted everyday practices in multiple sites, operating at both conscious and unconscious levels and open to contestation and renegotiation.*¹⁶⁹

I argue that these “institutional structures” do not simply exist, but rather they are created and maintained by global political economy and exercised through neoliberal global governance that is sustained by various practices at all levels of society. Hence women are given limited options from the start, and what is more, they are constrained to these options by the structure. Inside the club the concrete borders of social groups/classes, countries and regions become very real, which makes the so-called “borderless globalised world” seem a lot less borderless. In many cases the dancers from outside the United Kingdom or the European Union remain on the outside, even if they are on the inside “in flesh”. In other words, they may be inside the country, but they are not inside the society.

These institutional structures can also in my view be seen as sites of structural and cultural violence that also sometimes lead to direct violence inside the club. For example, the unequal opportunities women face is, in my opinion, a form of violence if one follows Galtung’s theory of the violence triangle. Moreover the stigma that is attached to women who work in the sex industry and the subsequent exclusion from society represents a form of cultural and structural violence. Another way to identify structural violence inside the club is to examine the unequal power relations between the male customers and female dancers. The way in which the men use power in the club correlates with Galtung’s idea of domination over aggression. What is interesting here is that the dancers don’t often feel that they are being dominated, quite the contrary actually. This can be partly explained by Galtung’s argument of why structural violence is usually silent. He argues that the victim of structural violence doesn’t often realise that they are a victim nor do others see them as victims due to the legitimising effects of cultural violence. In the UK, for example, the sex industry is seen as something very normal and natural, which may explain why the dancers do not feel like they are victims of structural violence.

5.1 b) Body politics

The body a woman is in often dictates the opportunities she has in the global economy. The racial, cultural, class and sexual differences of bodies determine the fate of many. Ganguly-Scrase and Julian argue that neoliberal policies that have spread around the world over the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid: 496

past couple of decades have hit women the hardest and increased gender equality. For example, cuts in social programs and health services have decreased women's opportunities in the labour market and made it more difficult for girls to be educated. This has also had a knock on effect on the levels of women's unpaid work and impoverishment.¹⁷⁰ Ganguly-Scrase and Julian list numerous ways in which women are worse off than men:

*Eighty per cent of refugees and internationally displaced people are women and children...women experience gendered forms of violence, such as rape, the fear of rape, body searches, enforced pregnancy, slavery, sexual trafficking, enforced sterilization, and infection with sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, as well social stigmatisation once they have been sexually assaulted...Women are the most abused refugees and the most unwanted migrants...Women do the most low skilled, least paid, most abused and dishonourable jobs.*¹⁷¹

Moreover, women's bodies are being commodified for different purposes. Different commercial ethnicities have been created, for example, black and Asian women are often depicted as erotic, exotic, carefree, submissive and ultrafeminised in the West. McDowell also points out that the recent enlargements of the European Union eastward has raised some new questions and issues 'about the location and ethnic identities of migrant workers' and 'the suitability of differently produced bodies for different categories of employment in the contemporary British labour market'.¹⁷² For example, at the club many customers still draw a line between girls from Western and Eastern Europe. They told me that they like the Eastern European girls because they were much "naughtier", "sexual" and "nicer" than their British counterparts. The fact that, for example, Poland and Romania are now part of the EU, did not make these men see the women from these countries as equals, but rather their ethnicity and the "Eastern body" they were in still placed them in a different and subsequently lower category.

5.1 c) Money talks

The role money and markets play in the club and consequently in the neoliberal Western societies became very clear during my interviews with both the dancers and the customers. Every single dancer I spoke with told me that the number one reason why they work at the club is money. The dancers justified doing what they do based on cost-benefit and market calculations. Anya from Poland and Tania from Romania both said that this job is not a career for them, but

¹⁷⁰ Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase, Gillian Vogl, Roberta Julian, "Neoliberal Globalisation and Women's Experiences of Forced migrations in Asia", Paper presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference: Centre for Social Change Research Queensland University of Technology, 28 Oct 2005, p. 5

¹⁷¹ Ganguly-Scrase & Julian, 2005: 5

¹⁷² McDowell, p.499-500

instead they are just doing it to save money and then they are moving back home. They have both been working at the club for 3 years now. Tania told me that she was never meant to keep working as a stripper this long but the problem for her is that even though she has a University degree in sociology she can't find "proper" work in the UK nor in Romania. As a stripper she usually earns more than 200 pounds a night. She said that on a good week she earns more than 1000 pounds and she never works more than 3 or 4 nights a week, which makes it very hard for her to leave the job. She has got used to a certain lifestyle. Anya agrees with Tania and tells me that she was working as a model and waitress before but she just wasn't earning enough to be able to save money. Now both she and her Polish boyfriend are working in the UK until they have saved enough money. However, she wasn't able to tell me how much money is "enough money".¹⁷³

It is not just the Eastern European girls who start working as erotic dancers because of the money. A Canadian girl I spoke with told me that she first worked at the club as a waitress but she wasn't earning enough money and she didn't like all the "dirty jobs" like cleaning the stage among other things. She explains: "Being a dancer here is glamorous and you can earn much more for doing less work". Thus, to her dancing equals higher value for money as she gets more money for doing less work.¹⁷⁴ A German girl called Zoe told me that she is currently working at an accountancy firm and training to be an accountant, but the job simply does not pay enough because she has a student loan from her biology degree and living expenses are so high in the UK. She said that without this second job she wouldn't be able to buy nice (expensive) clothes and go on nights out or on holidays. She told me that even her mother thinks that it is okay that she works as an erotic dancer because the men can't touch her and she is only "doing it for the money".¹⁷⁵ Thus for Zoe and her mother the amount of money she was able to earn by taking her clothes off justified the means. I also spoke with an 18 year old British girl who told me that she had got herself into trouble with her credit cards and now needed this job to pay off her existing debts and to maintain her "lifestyle".¹⁷⁶

It is evident that these girls are indeed "economic-rational individuals" who succumb to neoliberalist market logic, such as cost-benefit calculations, when making decisions on what is a legitimate and best way to earn money. The cool, calm and collected way in which the girls talked about why they are willing to take their clothes off for money made it clear to me that the

¹⁷³ Recorded interview with Tania and field notes from an interview with Anya 23.10.09

¹⁷⁴ Field notes from an interview with a Canadian girl 24.10.09

¹⁷⁵ Recorded interview with Zoe 22.10.09

¹⁷⁶ Field notes from an interview with a British girl 23.10.09

economic-rational thinking was immanent in them and thus made them conform to the norms of the market from inside out. The power neoliberal governance has to influence the way people not only act but also how they think can be witnessed here. The girls did not seem to be only passive subjects performing a job because they have to, but rather they seemed to be acting and thinking subjects that had made a conscious decision to work at the club in order to be good global consumers and participate in the system of global capital. This is equally true for the girls from Eastern Europe and from the West. All the girls wanted to earn enough money to be able to be good consumers and to “make it” in the world. Moreover, it appears that for Anya and Tania their initial goal to simply earn enough money to go back home had changed during their time in the UK. In three years they had become part of, and addicted to, the consumer culture of the West. It could be argued that this addiction is a result of the internalisation of neoliberal values, norms and rules that is an integral part of the process of becoming a good global consumer. Naturally, once you have made it “in”, it is not logical to voluntarily want out, considering that being outside of the system of global capital means that one is also an outsider from many other aspects of the society.

The importance of *value for money* was also clear in the thinking of the customers. One 24 year old Jamaican/British man told me that he likes to come to the club because there “men can be men and women can be women”. He explains that he doesn’t like the way modern women are “trying to be all equal and shit with men”. He said that he is aware that the only reason why the women act the way they do at the club is because he pays them, but he said that he doesn’t care. He likes the attention and compliments he gets from beautiful girls. He thinks that men and women are biologically different and that is why the sex industry exists. Hence, to him the value for money was that he gets to treat women in various unequal ways and the women treat him like he is superior to them. However, he also admitted that he is often disappointed when he goes to strip clubs because the women just can’t give him what he wants and he doesn’t respect the girls. He thinks that all the girls have “psychological and emotional problems”.¹⁷⁷ Here we see a case where an individual thinks that with money they can get, or rather deserve to get, what ever they want – even the power to exercise various levels of control over another human being’s body, behaviour and thinking.

Another customer, 47 years old British man, explains to me that he comes to the club because he is “old, ugly and fat” and because of that he can’t get young girl to take their clothes off without paying them. He told me that he often uses a website called dreamgirls.com where he can “order girls like take-away food”. He compares Asian women to Asian take-away food and so forth

¹⁷⁷ Field notes from an interview with 24 year old British/Jamaican man on 23.10.09

and laughs. He said that he doesn't really know why he comes to the club because he thinks that the girls think that they are prettier than what they actually are and that they can't even dance. However, he claims that sometimes he does take girls home from the club, which "makes it worth while".¹⁷⁸ To him the girls are simply products that can be bought and consumed, and consequently it makes him really upset when the product is not up to his standards.

5.2 Neoliberalist bio-politics and governmentality

5.2 a) The power of discourse

Discourses represent one way in which bio-power and bio-politics function in our societies. Through discourse peoples' thinking and acting can be influenced, changed and controlled. The most obvious discourses that can be found in a strip club are the ones that impact our thinking of sex and sexuality, and of consumerism, that is, what can be legitimately bought and sold. Firstly, erotic dancers experience all different varieties of discourse of sex at the club. Sex can be seen as desire, danger, eroticised and ethnised bodies, violations, commodity, and everything in between. The way in which a person's sexuality is controlled by the global neoliberal governance is evident in the behaviour of both the customers and the dancers. Hence, it could be asked whether a modern day strip club is in fact a by-product of hundreds of years of discourses of "truth" about sex and sexuality. This idea would fit in well with Foucault's theory of "regimes of truth" and "accepted knowledge". The actions of both the dancers and customers are in fact being governed from a distance through these discourses to direct the individual to certain type of behaviour. This could also partly explain why strip clubs and erotic dancers still spark such strong, and often negative, emotions in people and why are men still so fascinated by it. To put it simply, the regimes of truth and accepted knowledge keep the business going and the money flowing.

Another aspect of the regimes of truth and accepted knowledge is found in Foucault's idea of "screen-discourse". By this Foucault means the way in which the Church has managed to hide sex in the field of science, medicine and religion for centuries. I argue that nowadays, even though sex is literally everywhere, for example, when it comes to advertising, and it can be found at all level of our society; sex is still as hidden as it was two centuries ago. Perhaps this is precisely why "sex sells" so well and the sex industry is booming, despite all the women's rights movements and female emancipation of the past century.

¹⁷⁸ Field notes from an interview with a 47 year old British man on 23.10.09

Christianity also transformed people's relationship to themselves. This is now being re-enforced and multiplied by neoliberal governance. People feel the need to "find themselves" and to be able to explain to others exactly who they are, what they think and what they want. People are made to believe that they are free to be who ever they want to be and to express themselves and their sexuality as they please, when in reality we are governed to succumb to compulsory heteronormativity from the moment we are born. The depth of the heteronormative thinking can be witnessed in the still persistent debate over gay rights and the growth of the sex industry. One's sexuality becomes public knowledge and open to scrutiny as soon as one doesn't follow the heteronormal path. I argue that these discourses of sex and sexuality are forms of neoliberalist governmentality as they demonstrate how neoliberalism is not only 'ideological rhetoric' or a 'political-economic reality', but first and foremost 'a political project that endeavours to create a social reality that it suggests already exists.'¹⁷⁹

5.2 b) Freedom of the individual

The idea of freedom is crucial to neoliberalist bio-politics. This is because efficient governmentality requires the subject to internalise neoliberalist norms, rules and values voluntarily in order to function. When I asked the dancers if they felt like objects or if they felt degraded by what they do, many of them said that most of the time they do not as *they have the freedom of choice*. They have chosen to come and work at this specific club. They choose which customer they speak to. They choose which customer they dance for. They choose what they wear. They choose how they do their hair and make-up. And most importantly, they had chosen to work at this club because of its non-contact rule. Thus they chose that the men cannot touch them. This gives the dancers the feeling that they are in control and that they have the power. The apparent freedom of choice is critical for the neoliberal logic of subjectivation and thus for controlling and managing the population, which in this case consists of the dancers. The flipside of the neoliberalist "freedom of the individual coin" at the club is the fact that the girls are actually self-employed and thus ultimately and literally responsible for their own actions. What this means is that by hiring the dancers as self-employed workers the club can cover its own back should anything go wrong or should the dancers or the customers break the rules.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid: 203

However, when one looks at these *free* choices of the dancers more closely they start to look a lot less free. Firstly, the dancers are told that they can wear what they want *as long as* what they wear meets the guidelines set by the management. In other words, the dancers have to wear long see-through dresses, skimpy underwear or an outfit, such as the naughty nurse or a dominatrix policewoman. They are also told to wear high heels. The high heel rule is so strict that the required height of the heels is actually written down in their contract. It also states in the contract that if the management is not happy with the way the dancer looks they have the right to refuse the dancer to work. Moreover, one couldn't really imagine any of the dancers not to wear make-up. The same applies to the behaviour of the dancers too. They are not told who to talk to – correct – but they are told how to talk, for how long, and also how to dance. For example, a dancer is not allowed to perform a stage show until the management is happy with the way the dancer moves.¹⁸⁰ Here we can see clearly how these free choices are in fact ‘an artificially created form of behaviour’ that operates in ‘an artificially arranged liberty’.¹⁸¹ The dancers are made to believe that they are making free decisions, when in reality they are relentlessly being governed to ‘conform to the norms of the market’, which in this case consists of the wishes of the management and the customers.¹⁸²

The customers at the club are also exercising their freedom of choice. They are free consumers who can spend their money as they wish. The management told me that in order to provide good service for the customers they always make sure they have girls from different ethnic background working at the club and also girls of different shapes and sizes in order to offer a nice selection for the customers. This form of behaviour supports the argument that in neoliberalism the choices of the individual consumers are what matters over what markets or states dictate. Consequently, in a neoliberal society the consumer is the most important component of the society that needs to be governed, which in turn requires new ways of governance. As mentioned in the theory section the way in which the consumer decides to use their money turns him or her to a ‘behaviouristically manipulable being and the correlative of a governmentality, which systematically changes the variables of the ‘environment’ and can count on the “rational choice” of the individuals’.¹⁸³ In other words the “freedom of choice” the customers think that they are exercising at the club is equally predetermined by bio-political governance as are the free actions of the dancers.

¹⁸⁰ Field notes from an interview with a floor manager and the girls.

¹⁸¹ Lemke, 2001: 200

¹⁸² Larner, 2000: 12

¹⁸³ Lemke, 2001: 200

5.3 Subjectivation of erotic dancers: a novel form of female empowerment or a facade for modern day oppression of women?

5.3 a) Am I a stripper, a dancer, an artist, a Madonna, a whore, an entertainer or a sexual object –that is the question.

Subjectivation, that is, the process of ‘tying oneself to an identity’¹⁸⁴, of the erotic dancers can take different forms. As already discussed in the theory chapter Foucault explains that the first way in which an individual can become a subject is through linguistics and philosophy or through wealth and economics. The latter is very evident with some of the erotic dancers as they see themselves as being productive subjects that perform labour in return for monetary reward. They identify themselves as “dancers” and “performers” thus their subjectivity and identity is tied to their status as a self-employed entertainer.

For example, a German girl Zoe told me that she sees the men simply as “paying customers”. It is “strictly business”, she says. “I like their money, I want their money”. To her “it is all very clinical”.¹⁸⁵ This would thus allocate Zoe into Foucault’s first category of subject formation. Zoe feels like a subject with agency because of her strict way of looking at the interaction between herself and the customer like any other business transaction. The fact that she is the product that is being consumed does not take away her agency because she doesn’t let it. Here we can see elements of Foucault’s ‘techniques of the self’ in play. Zoe tells me that she consciously makes herself think of the money whilst performing a fully nude lap dance. She says:

*I felt like I am in control and that I have the power because the men had to do what I told them to. They weren’t allowed to touch me. I was able to tease them which made me feel in control. But that was only when the music was on. As soon as the music stopped I was out the zone and wanted to get my clothes on as quickly as possible. I just wanted to get away from them and I didn’t want to talk to them again.*¹⁸⁶

Hence, Zoe’s subject position as a productive subject was strictly tied to the act of performing her labour. The fact that the customer was paying her to dance for him gave her, in her mind, *supernatural powers*- to use Foucault’s term. However, “when the music stopped” she lost her power, her agency, and consequently her subject position vanished.

¹⁸⁴ Penttinen, 2004:87

¹⁸⁵ Recorded interview at the club 22.10.2009

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

The second category of subject formation in Foucault's theory is subjectivation through dividing practices. This can mean the division of different identities within yourself or division between you and others.¹⁸⁷ I found evidence of both of these dividing practices with the girls I interviewed. Firstly, many girls made a point of saying that they have two different personalities: the "normal self" and the "stripper self". All of the girls at the club use fake names and they are discouraged to share any personal information about themselves with the customers. Some of the girls go as far as taking on a completely different identity when they are working. They would, for example, make up stories about themselves and lie about their background etc. depending on what they think the customer wants to hear. Anya from Poland tells me that she sees herself as a different person when she is outside the club – "the real her". It is not the real her working at the club. She changes her behaviour depending on the man. She tries to figure out what the customer wants and what kind of girls he likes and then modifies her behaviour accordingly. She tells me that she has a boyfriend and she often thinks of him when she is dancing for the customers. Anya does the same dance for every man and they are all just generic customers to her. She doesn't tell anything personal about herself to the customers.¹⁸⁸ Hence, Anya has created a "stripper identity" for herself, which allows her to become a subject also inside the club and feel like she is in control of the situation.

Another division is the division between the dancers. Many girls whom I spoke with made a point of separating themselves from the other dancers who go home with the customers, dance more provocatively, bend the rules during their lap dances or are involved in other aspects of the sex industry, such as pornography. Here nationality or ethnicity doesn't matter, but rather the actions of the given individual are what counts. Even the bouncers and managers divide the girls into "good girls" and "the rest" according to the criteria whether the girls are "naughty" and try to bend the rules or whether they are nice girls who do as they are told.¹⁸⁹ Thus, the club is divided into two main camps. The separation isn't just mental. It materialised in where the girls would sit when it was quiet –the good girls always sat together. There is also fierce competition between the two camps. One night I saw a group of customers come in and when they told the first girl who approached them that they would like seven girls by the hour for private shows the girl recruited seven girls from her camp within seconds. The "others" didn't stand a chance. The girls told me that sometimes the competition turns ugly and the "bad girls" would, for example, steel items of

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Notes from an interview with Anya 23.10.09

¹⁸⁹ Notes from discussions with two bouncers, a floor manager, and the owner of the club.

clothing, make-up or money from the good girls. This division into “good” and “bad” gives the girls collective identities and subjectivity through the sense of belonging to, and indentifying oneself to a larger group.

A division between moral and immoral woman from a point of view of the customer and the general public, also known as the Madonna/whore division, was evident at the club. This became clear when some of the girls told me they do not like to tell people that they work as erotic dancers as they know that the society and people are likely to judge them and treat them as bad and immoral women. Moreover, the girls said that they know that the men don't like to think of them as somebody's mother, daughter, sister or wife, thus the girls are encouraged to act in a certain way that distances them for this natural association. When I asked the customers if they would date the erotic dancers the answer was *no* 90 percent of the time. One man said: “How could you take a stripper home to meet your mum?” Some of the men also told me that they do not like to get to know the girls too well as this destroys the fantasy and turns the “strippers” into “normal girls”. Another aspects of this is the fact that some of the men said they would feel guilty and weird if they were to get a fully nude lap-dance from a girl they got to know on a personal level.¹⁹⁰ This raises interesting questions about why so many dancers and customers feel that they are doing something immoral, forbidden and wrong, and how this affects the subjectivation process.

One way to start to analyse the Madonna/whore paradox is through Foucault's ideas of pastoral power. As already discussed earlier in this paper Foucault argues that the morals, values and ideas of the Church are still present in our modern states and influence people on an individual, as well as population level. Firstly, the fact that all the girls I interview preferred to keep their profession secret, sometimes even from people closest to them, indicates that even if the dancer herself didn't consider working as an erotic dancer as immoral, they still preferred to hide it because the people outside the club “just don't understand”.¹⁹¹ This lack of understanding could possibly be explained by the still prevalent pastoral power in our societies. The Church has throughout times been preaching about how sex outside of wedlock, not to mention prostitution, is highly immoral and wrong. These values and norms are buried so deep in most people that it causes them to automatically judge the strippers as second class citizens and immoral women.

¹⁹⁰ Field notes from discussions with several customers and dancers during all the nights I spent at the club.

¹⁹¹ Field notes from discussions with several dancers during all the nights I spent at the club.

Secondly, the sense of guilt that some customers felt when they were inside the club could partly be explained by the religious values that they had internalised from an early age at school or in Church. They knew they were doing something “wrong” and thus they needed the dancer to stay in the sphere of the abject, in other words, the dancer must remain “socially dead”. Here the woman is turned into a “gendered”, “eroticized” and “ethnicized” abject that allows the normal subject e.g. the man or the “normal woman” to exist.¹⁹² Thirdly, Penttinen argues that the abject also ‘stirs up fascination’¹⁹³, which in itself draws the men to the club, as the forbidden fruit has throughout time tasted better than the one that is readily available. The club thus provides God fearing men and good citizens a place where they can safely and openly fulfill their sexual fantasies and do something naughty.

Another way to remove the guilt and shame was the way in which some of the men chose to turn the dancers from socially dead abject to subjects who needed their help. The men saw themselves as good Samaritans who were in fact helping the women by buying a dance from them. One man said to me “well someone has to put them through college”. When the dancers spotted the good Samaritans they would also use this as a trick to get the men to buy dances. They would say things such as “I am just trying to feed my little children” or “I am trying to get a degree” or “I came to England to make money so that I can send it back home to my family.”¹⁹⁴ This made the men feel good about themselves and allowed them to enjoy the dance.

The third mode of subjectivation is the process through which individuals turn themselves into subjects. According to Foucault this is often linked to sexuality and happens when ‘individuals have learned to recognise themselves as subjects of “sexuality”’¹⁹⁵. This is certainly the case with some of the dancers as they attach their “stripper identity” to their sexuality. For example, one of the girls told me that she feels more sexually liberated when she is inside the club, than when she is with her boyfriend. It appears to me that the strong emphasis on the sexuality of the dancers can cause them to turn themselves into sexual subjects – instead of passive and docile objects. It may sound obvious to state that sexuality is important in a strip club, however the point I am trying to make is that the sexuality of the dancers is also important to the dancers themselves –not just to the paying customers. When I asked Zoe from Germany how the dancing makes her feel she replied: “I am almost ashamed to say it but I really enjoy it”. She explains:

¹⁹² Penttinen, 2008: 16–17

¹⁹³ Penttinen, 2004: 93–95

¹⁹⁴ Field notes from discussions with several customers and dancers during all the nights I spent at the club.

¹⁹⁵ Foucault cited in Penttinen 2004: 87

There was this one world where I am actually quite insecure so getting all of this attention from men – most of them are drunk and can't actually go up to a woman because they are very unattractive with bad breath and it is actually not nice to be around them and I just tried not to think about it – but it feels great to feel wanted. Men have asked me to marry them and they give me many compliments ...like that I have the best breasts they have ever seen. You get compliments all the time which really boosted my self-confidence. I am really insecure about my body.¹⁹⁶

Moreover, it wasn't just Zoe who admitted that she enjoys dancing for the men. One girl from England told me that she actually gets “turned on” sometimes when she dances for a “hot guy” and that when she is working she feels “hornier” than usually. She explained to me that it is all to do with the process of “becoming a stripper”. It starts the second she walks into the club. She sees the sexy décor and the lights and the pole and she starts to get “in the mood”.¹⁹⁷ One evening I was allowed into the dressing room to observe this transformation. All the girls seemed to like to get ready in their underwear or fully naked. They started by putting on their spray tans and sparkling creams and lotions and perfumes. Then they'd put on their “stripper make-up” and do their hair. The change from the girl who walked in to club to the girl who was ready to start working was often so drastic that I struggled to recognize the girls later on. The girls told me that this is why they prefer to do their hair and make-up at the club. It provided them a sense of anonymity. Then the girls put on their outfits and they would watch themselves in the mirror for ages – from the front, the back and the side. The girls would also make comments about each others appearance – even the most intimate parts of their bodies. They would also touch each others breast etc. to compare them. Especially the girls who had silicone implants were keen to compare their breasts. What is more, the “locker room talk” seemed to circle around sex. The “bad” girls told others in loud voices and in detail about their sex lives and the jokes were sometimes extremely sexual and “dirty”. The girls also told stories of the customers they had had –the good the bad and the ugly.¹⁹⁸

This process of getting ready seemed to take hours. Many girls come to the club even two to three hours before the club opens in order to have enough time to “get in the mood”. Many girls also bring in their own alcohol and they would have a few drinks before and during their shift. It became clear to me that some of the girls would not have been able to work without the encouragement that they got from alcohol. Anya and Tania both told me that they could not handle talking to the drunken customers and dancing for them night after night if they were sober

¹⁹⁶ Extract from a recorded interview with Zoe 22.10.09

¹⁹⁷ Notes from an interview with an English girl who has worked as a stripper for 7 years.

¹⁹⁸ Notes from observations and discussions in the girls' changing room 24.10.09

themselves. The girls told me that it depends on the manager how strict they are about alcohol usage. Some managers allowed the girls to bring in their own alcohol, when others wanted the girls to get customers to buy them drinks. The club, however, had zero drug-policy and drug tests were carried out at random. It became clear to me that this process of getting ready and transforming into the “stripper self” was crucial to many of the dancers. It was a process through which the girls turned themselves into sexual subjects. Foucauldian analysis on self-discipline, that is, how an individual can control himself, often without realising the power s/he upholds by doing it, can be utilised to understand the transformation process of the dancers. This power, also known as bio-power, is the force behind subjectivation.

I argue that it is the self-discipline of the dancers that make the subjectivation of erotic dancers different compared to, for example, the prostitutes that Penttinen interviewed.¹⁹⁹ The main difference is that for the most part the dancers seem to be able to keep their subjectivity and not turn into powerless abjects or objects. Quite the opposite actually: Many of the dancers told me that they do not respect the men who come to the club and they treat them all in the same impersonal manner. They do not see the men as individuals but as part of a large mass of faceless, soulless objects. Thus, it is the men who can be reduced to a passive and docile abjects in the erotic club. Moreover, the dancers told me that sometimes they voluntarily turn themselves into objects to get the men to buy a dance from them. The women are thus active subject that use their sexual agency to manipulate the situation to their advantage. Based on my interviews and observations I would argue that the main reason for this strong subject position of the erotic dancers compared to prostitutes is the simple fact on non-contact. The women felt in charge (for the most part) because the men could not touch them. Thus, it seems that the line between a powerful subject with agency and self-control, and a socially dead powerless abject can be traced to the actual skin of the woman. As long as the dancer felt in control of her own skin she did not feel like a powerless object or an abject. This realisation is something that surprised me as I have not read anything about it in the literature concerning erotic dancers prior to embarking on this research venture. It would be interesting to test this finding in other settings of the global sex industry, such as more traditional massage parlor prostitution for example.

Now here comes the catch: The apparent subjectivity felt by the dancers does not change the fact that the customers and many other people in the general public still objectify the dancers and see them as abjects, rather than subjects. Hence, we can see a fascinating interplay of

¹⁹⁹ Penttinen, 2004

two different interpretations of subjectivation in this erotic club: On the one hand we have the dancers with sexual agency and subject position to whom the men are the objects and abjects, and on the other hand we have the customers who see the women as objects and abjects and themselves as having the power and agency. This line of reasoning fits in well with Foucault's argument about there being two different subject positions: 'subject to someone else by control and dependence', or 'tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge'.²⁰⁰ The dancers are subjects (or rather abjects) to the customers and the general public, whilst simultaneously being subjects of their own right through self-knowledge and discipline.

5.3 b) Embodied representations of bio-power: commodification and objectification of erotic dancers

The "Gentlemen's Clubs" around the world provide a great example of how neoliberal policies and practices can commodify and objectify women, even within states that are supposed to promote gender equality and be opposed to objectification of women. I argue that one way to identify a connection between neoliberal global governance and the objectification of women in erotic clubs is to look at today's advertising and different media portals to identify the different ways in which women are represented in them, and to analyse the goings on inside a particular strip club through these representations. As discussed in the theory section Gill classifies three different and very novel representations of women in advertising: the *midriff*, the *hot lesbian* and the *vengeful woman*, that are all promoted and celebrated as new forms of female empowerment.

The figure of the midriff can easily be found not just in the world of advertising and media, but also in the world of erotic dancing. Many of the girls I spoke with told me that they love the sense of power they get from dancing for the men. As already mentioned, I would argue that the root of this power is in the non-contact rule. In other words, the women feel empowered because the men cannot touch them. They can tease the men and use their weaknesses to take advantage of them. I shall also argue that to be an erotic dancer one must possess a certain amount of self-confidence and sexual confidence, considering that some of the things the girls do during the stage shows and lap dancing shows are quite sexually explicit. For example, I saw girls simulating masturbation whilst giving a customer a lap dance. This gives the impression that the dancers are indeed 'always up for it'. However, the truth of the matter is that most girls simply fake it. They make it appear to the customer that they are genuinely attracted to them and turned on by them.

²⁰⁰ Foucault, 1982: 781

Naturally many of the customers know that the girls are faking it but this doesn't seem to bother them. It should be noted though, that some of the dancers told me that they are genuinely very sexual and genuinely enjoy what they do and get sexual pleasure from it. However, this empowerment is only gained through the attention from men and also through the envy of the other dancers. Thus without sexual attractiveness the dancers would not feel empowered. Moreover, this sexual attractiveness is dictated by the society – by consumerism and advertisement – and limited to the heterosexual norm.

The figure of the “vengeful woman” can also be found in the strip club. The dancers told me that the tables are turned in the club precisely because the men can't touch them. This to the girls means that they can get back at men and “torture” them with their sexual attractiveness without giving them the “happy ending” they really want. Many of the girls told me they absolutely love teasing the men and that they enjoy seeing them “suffer”. The girls referred to the customers as “stupid, sad and lonely losers” who cannot get a girl to take her clothes off without having to pay for it. They said that they are using the men – not the other way around. Same thing applies for the “hot lesbian” image. The girls told me they often double-up to get dances more easily. This doubling, not surprisingly, follows the same logic as it does in advertising. The girls either team up with a dancer who looks like them, or is opposite to them. So here again the women said they are knowingly using the weaknesses of men to empty their pockets from cash, which makes the dancers feel empowered. What is interesting is that some of the dancers at the club are actually lesbians, but when they are working in the club they succumb to the heterosexual understanding of feminine beauty and act like the “hot lesbians” do in advertising and mainstream pornography – as do all the other girls too.

Thus it appears that the women seem to think that the safe environment and rules of the club provide them with a setting in which they can use their sexual powers to feel empowered. However, I would argue that the ultimate power still lies with the customers and they have the power to choose which girl they want and reject the ones they do not want, and if they wanted to touch the girls, they could. For example, one dancer told me that once a customer had licked his fingers and then used his fingers to penetrate a dancer whilst she was dancing for him. The girl had naturally been very upset and told the other girls that it had all happened too quickly for her, or the bouncers, to react. The only punishment the customer received was that he was thrown out of the club. I was also told of another similar instance where a customer had licked the dancer's genital

area when she was dancing for him and had her back towards him. Again, the only punishment the customer received was that he was escorted, politely, out of the club.

I argue that the images of women the dancers see in advertising, in TV-shows and in magazines crucially affect their subjectivation process in two different ways. Firstly, by acting and looking like the women in adverts, on TV and in magazines the dancers get a sense of empowerment. They think that being a “midriff”, a “vengeful woman” or a “hot lesbian” equals having power over men. After my four nights at the club I was left with the thought that some of the dancers actually see working as a stripper as representing a novel 21st century form of female emancipation. However, what the dancers didn’t seem to realise, or care about, is that the purpose of advertising is to sell products - not to empower women. Yes, it is true that the advertising executives have realised that women are now consumers in their own right and they have cleverly used women’s new financial, emotional and sexual independence as tools to sell their products, nevertheless, this does not automatically mean that this newfound independence would be real for all women. Rather it could be seen as an artificially created form of reality and thus a form of neoliberal governance. Same thing applies for TV and magazine companies. They too have jumped on the bandwagon of 21st century female empowerment and created shows and magazines that feed it.

However, when one looks at these adverts, shows and magazines more closely one can see that they often still encourage women to follow the stereotypical heterosexual image of a perfect woman – perfect from a man’s point of view – and that they are simply brainwashing women to buy products that allegedly further empower the given individual. McDowell and others argue that this artificial production of gender is done through a “heterosexual matrix”, which refers to ‘a set of norms through which identity is defined’. In this framework ‘a hegemonic version of sex’ is established through a notion of gender that is ‘oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality’. These heterosexual identities are upheld ‘through the policing of hegemonic performances and the shaming of ‘abnormal’ performances, through a process of Othering’.²⁰¹ I argue that the way in which women are represented in the media and advertising forms a part of this heterosexual matrix, which in turn legitimises the erotic dancing industry and dictates the subjectivation and objectivation process of the dancers.

²⁰¹ McDowell, p.497

5.4 Conclusion

The aim of the analysis section was to demonstrate how global neoliberal governance is connected to the sex industry by examining how it works in practice in one sphere of the sex industry. To do this in the most logical way I followed the four theoretical steps that were established in the theory section. I tried to find empirical proof for each theoretical argument through the various ethnographic fieldwork methods I utilised to collect my data.

The first thing that was analysed was the diversity of nationalities present at the club and what it can tell us about migration flows and the differences between countries when it comes to opportunities for women in the labour market and gender equality. It was discovered that the dancers from less developed countries – both within Europe and outside it – were subject to managed migration policies and gendered patterns of work that eventually sent them knocking on the strip club's door. It was also argued that the institutional structures that place the immigrant workers into lower sections of the society are maintained by global neoliberal governance and could be seen as sites of structural violence. The reason for this can be partly explained by body politics – namely that the body the woman is in dictates how she is treated by the customers and the kind of opportunities she has in the UK. Once the global structure was established I wanted to understand more why the women ultimately made the choice to become strippers. It was discovered that the current logic of the market and global consumerism was at the forefront of the dancers' thinking. The phrase "money talks" was very present at the club in the thinking of both the dancers and customers.

Secondly, it was argued that neoliberalist bio-politics and governmentality were present at the club in the form of discourse. It was revealed that many discourses of truth and knowledge about sex and sexuality influenced the behaviour of the dancers and the customers. The origins of these discourses were traced back to Christianity, and the Church in general that created the so-called heteronormative matrix, which is still present in our societies today. Another phenomenon through which neoliberal bio-politics could be identified at the club was the idea of the freedom of the individual that is so crucial to efficient governance. The fact that the dancers had seemingly voluntarily chosen to come to work at the club and were free to choose their customers gave them a sense of independence and power.

Thirdly, Foucault's theory of subject formation was applied to the individual experiences of the dancers to find out what type of subject position existed in the club and what this can tell us about the bigger picture of modern day gender equality. It was discovered that the subjectification process of erotic dancers is highly complex and different from, for example, prostitutes due to the non-contact aspect of stripping. However, the need for the customers to see the dancers as objects or socially dead objects complicates the power relations and subject formation process even further. The customers did not, for the most part, seem to see much of a difference between prostitutes and strippers, which renders the apparent empowerment that some of the dancers felt obsolete. It was discovered that Foucault's theory of two different subject positions can explain this dichotomy.

Fourthly, the role advertising and popular culture play in the sense of empowerment felt by many modern women was discussed. It was argued that adverts, reality and lifestyle TV-shows, and women's magazines form a part of the heterosexual matrix that govern and control women, and make the erotic dancers think that taking their clothes off for money and dancing naked for men actually equals emancipation and empowerment.

VI Concluding remarks

To conclude I wish to firstly reflect back on the original research questions that were set out in the beginning of this thesis. The overall theme to be looked at was: How does global neoliberal governance (re)produce and support the global sex industry and gender inequality in the world of erotic dancing? In my view to be able to discuss only one aspect of the sex industry it was necessary to first lay out a theory than can be used to examine the global sex industry as a whole. The validity of the overall theory was demonstrated in the background chapter that separated the sex industry into four main categories: sex trafficking, sex tourism, prostitution and erotic dancing. It was found that global neoliberal governance affects all of the aforementioned aspects in different yet interconnected ways.

The unequal position of women in the global economy makes women more vulnerable to fall into the hand of traffickers, pimps and "ordinary johns". In most parts of the world women have from birth fewer options than men to succeed and to be financially independent. The persistent structural patriarchy on all levels of society around the world supports the system of prostitution and the sex industry as a whole. Neoliberal morals, values and norms also normalise the sex

industry and even glamorise it. Commodification of female bodies has become the rule, rather than the exception. What is more, this structural and ideological inequality also makes it harder to fight sex trafficking and prostitution as states are reluctant to deal with the issues. The huge amount of money the sex industry generates is also a crucial factor in why the sex industry is allowed to exist. Furthermore the spread of neoliberalism around the world, with the advance of air travel and the internet, has opened new ways for consumers, traffickers and pimps to take advantage of women in vulnerable positions. Of course, not all women who work in the sex industry are helpless victims nor involved in it against their will. This is however, not the point of my argument, nor the object of my research. My point is that the spread of neoliberal globalisation and global governance enables and facilitates – even encourages – the sex industry to exist. This brings back the chicken and egg question. Which came first, the demand for women to work in the sex industry or the supply of women willing to do it? I don't think there is a correct, or an easy answer to that question. This is the beauty of the laws of supply and demand in all aspects of the capitalist world economy. You can as easily argue that “As long as there is supply there will be demand” as “As long as there is demand there will be supply”.

Once it was made clear that there are many ways in which global neoliberal governance is present in the global sex industry as a whole I wanted to make things less abstract and general by looking at one specific case study from the sex industry. I chose one particular erotic dance club in Brighton, United Kingdom, where I conducted an ethnographic case study over a period of one week. This was by no means an easy setting to do fieldwork research in. My own subject position, gender and age made it at times challenging for me to remain objective and professional. On the other hand, these factors also helped to me to build rapport with both the dancers and the customers and, I believe, in the end I was able to gather valid and meaningful data that enabled me to test my theoretical arguments in a real setting in the “real world”.

I was able to identify numerous aspects of neoliberal governance inside the club, be it in the ethnicity and origin of the dancers; in the behaviour and thoughts of the customers; in the interaction between the dancers and the customers; in the interaction between the dancers; or in the management's treatment of the girls. Firstly it was discovered that the ethnicity and origin of the dancers and the reasons why they had decided to come and work at the club supported the arguments about body politics and migration flows from less developed and less equal countries to the West. Once in the West the girls' social class, gender and ethnicity dictated their options in the labour market and placed them in “gendered patters” of work. In my opinion this structure of

inequality and unequal opportunities, which is culturally legitimised by global neoliberal governance, should be seen as a form of structural violence. As a result women from certain background are either totally excluded from the society, or have to exist in the margins of the society. I argue that global neoliberal governance acts as the force behind these institutional structures.

The role money plays in the club revealed some interesting features of the neoliberal world order. On one hand, the dancers justified their actions and choices by rationally calculating that the monetary reward they get for dancing naked for men offsets any shame, embarrassment, harassment, objectivation or oppression caused by this act. The importance of being a good global consumer overshadows everything else, because money makes us all equal in the neoliberal world. What is more, it appeared that the girls had totally internalised this economic-rational thinking and were not questioning it in the least. Neoliberalism had thus succeeded in its goal of making its subjects succumb to its logic from inside out. On the other hand, the customers viewed money as something that gave them superiority, almost God-like status and power, in the interaction between them and the dancers in the club. They expected the dancers to behave – and look – a certain way. The women were robbed of their real identify and subjectivity, and reduced into products and objects that can be moulded according to the consumers' wishes.

To dwell deeper into the behaviour and thinking of both the customers and dancers I utilised Foucault's ideas of the "regime of truth" and "accepted knowledge" to analyse the different discourses about sex, sexuality and consumerism that can be found in the club. Foucault argues that the way in which humans think about sex and sexuality is a product of hundreds of years of discourses that are controlled and distributed by the Church. I found evidence of this in the club in the way in which both the dancers and customers described how they felt about what they do in the club. The women were convinced that the general public judges them as bad and immoral women, and even though many of them were not ashamed of what they do they still wouldn't tell even their closest family members and friends about what they do. Also the strong emphasis on heterosexuality that is so prominent in the club could be argued to come from the Church and the "regimes of truth".

The customers, in turn, seemed to by and large suffer from the Madonna/whore complex. Many of them treated the dancers as socially dead objects. In order to buy a fully nude lap dance from a dancer they had to think of the woman as something outside of the "normal" woman. What I mean by this is the way in which the customers could not see the dancers as someone's

mother, daughter, wife or sister. This immanent guilt or shame in the men's thinking could be partly explained by the strong norms, values and rules about sex and sexuality that have been inflicted upon us since birth over centuries. However, the flip side of this is that this makes the sex industry something dangerous, exciting and exotic, all which are things that act like magnets to human beings.

Another core aspect of neoliberal governmentality is the notion that all individuals are free subject who make their own decision and take responsibility for them. This was clear in the thinking of both the dancers and the customers. The dancers felt that they are not objects, oppressed or in any way powerless because they had chosen to come and work at this specific club. They choose what to wear, which men to talk to and what moves to perform during their dances. The men also chose to come to the club and they get to choose which girl to talk to and which girl to see naked. I, however, argue that these choices are far from free, as neoliberalism uses techniques that penetrate the individual without them knowing. This is done by controlling and governing knowledge through communication and information. It is an artificial sense of freedom that is able to exist because the liberty in which it operates is also artificial. Due to the democratic nature of our neoliberal societies the conduct of governance must be, and is, perpetuated by the subjects of governance themselves. The predicament or paradox of this kind of system is the fact that it undermines the basic morals and beliefs liberalism was built upon.

The second research question this thesis set out to answer was: What kind of subject positions can be found in one specific lap dancing club and how do these positions emerge? I used Foucault's well known theory of subject formation to see which type of subject positions the dancers had and added my own reflections on why and how they might have emerged. I was able to identify all three categories of subject formation in the dancers. Firstly, some of the dancers became subjects through their status as a worker, in other words, through earning money from their labour. They were able to view their fully nude lap dances as a separate product that they were selling to the customers. They did not feel that they were selling themselves, their own naked bodies per se, but rather a dance performed by their alter ego the "stripper self". Interestingly, albeit not surprisingly, this subject position was inherently tied to the act of performing their labour. When the dancer stopped dancing they found themselves without this subject position.

The second category, subjectivation through dividing practices, had many faces at the club. The dancers separated themselves into many different categories according to their nationality, ethnicity and behaviour. What is more, the management reinforced this separation by openly

dividing the girls into good and bad girls, and the local and the foreign girls. The dancers were able to become subjects when they tied their identity to a larger group, for example the “Eastern European girls” or the “good Western girls”. Crucial here is also the way in which the girls divided themselves into a “normal self” and “stripper self”. The girls were encouraged to do this by the management and expected to do this by many of the customers. Many girls I spoke with said that the only way they were able to work at the club was by becoming someone else and creating a whole new identity when inside the club. The “stripper self” thus saw herself as a subject, not an object or an abject.

Finally, the third mode of subjectivation is the way in which one actively turns oneself into a subject. Some of the dancers consciously recognised themselves as sexual subjects and voluntarily turned themselves into this. They activated their sexuality and tied their identity to it in order to achieve subjectivity. I discovered that the self-discipline and active participation in their subjectivity was closely connected to the non-contact rule at the club. The fact that the dancers were in charge of their own skin allowed them to maintain their subjectivity even when the customers treated them like objects or abjects. Foucault’s theory of the possibility of more than one simultaneous subject position can explain this. The dancers were able to be subjects to themselves through self disciplining practices and awareness, when at the same time being subjects to the customers by control and dependence.

Furthermore, I argued that another factor affecting the dancers’ subjectivation process is representation of women in today’s mass media. It was discovered that the three common female representations found in advertising – the midriff, the vengeful woman and the hot lesbian – are all evident in the dancers’ behaviour and thinking. Moreover, I argued that British and American reality TV-shows such as “How to look good naked”, “What not to wear”, “10 years younger”, various dating shows about finding true happiness only through getting married to your perfect soul mate, and women’s magazines all form a part of the heterosexual matrix that is so intrinsic to the neoliberal world order. In my opinion, the heterosexual matrix is manned by a global biopolitical machine that has been created by neoliberal governance.

The ability of modern states to exert power over their subjects both on an individual and population level makes the power of global neoliberal governance so totalising and immanent. It is remarkable how in neoliberal societies there can exist extreme forms of individualism, the idea that no one is in control of your happiness but you, when at the same time the way we are supposed

to think and act is totally controlled by the biopolitical machine of neoliberal governance – without us realising it. One drawback of total individualism is that it can cause people to feel the need to pay other people for physical and mental interaction. Thus, even emotions – not just bodies – have become something consumable. This was very clear in the club where men often pay for the women to just talk to them and to make them feel special.

This thesis was an attempt to critique global neoliberal governance by investigating the way in which it is linked to the global sex industry. I argue that conducting this type of research at one specific erotic club in Great Britain opens a door to a world that is usually more or less hidden from the “normal” world and from the discipline of International Relations. This hidden world, however, is as real, or even more real, as it is a space where the ugly truth of global neoliberal governance manifests itself. It is absolutely part of, and a product of, the neoliberal world order and consequently the disciplines of IR and IPE.

This thesis asserts the need for further study of the global political economy of sex and its causes. More emphasis needs to be put on the demand side of the problem, on the patriarchal and unequal policies of states, and on structural inequality. Academic disciplines, such as IR, should incorporate a gendered aspect to its mainstream theories. Moreover in the public sphere there should be further debate over the use of the word feminist and feminism. Might it be useful to introduce a brand new word to describe the fight for gender equality? Terms and initiatives, such as “gender mainstreaming” that are used by, for example, the United Nations, are a start but much more work needs to be done. Moreover, more states should consider following in Sweden’s footsteps regarding their new prostitution laws and overall stand on the fight against prostitution and sex trafficking. More needs to be done to deal with the crimes committed by sex tourists from the West to the developing countries, and more needs to be done to offer women a way out of the sex industry. This thesis is my humble contribution to the debate.

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Appendix I

Questions for the dancers:

1. Age, nationality, education
2. How did you get into this line of work?
3. Why do you work as an erotic dancer? Economical or personal reason?
4. Is this your main source of income?
5. Do you tell people you work as a dancer? If YES –what do people tend to think about it? If NOT –why not?
6. How does it make you feel when you dance for the men (or women)?
7. How do you select the customer you approach?
8. How do you try to sell the dance to the customer?
9. How does the interaction between you and the customer usually work? What do you talk about?
10. How do the customers usually treat you? Do they ever treat you like a prostitute/sex worker?
11. What do you think of the customers who come to the club?
12. Why do you think they come here? What are they looking for?
13. Do you treat them as individual or just paying customers?
14. What do you think the general public thinks of your profession?
15. Do you think you work in the sex industry?

Questions for the customers:

1. Age, nationality, profession
2. Why do you come to the club? Do you come alone or with friends?
3. How often do you visit these kinds of establishments?
4. Why do you want to pay to talk to a woman or to see them naked? Is it good value for money?
5. How does it make you feel come here?
6. How does it make you feel to have a girl dancing for you?
7. Would you date these girls?
8. What do you think of the rules they have in this club?
9. Would you be willing to pay more for “extras”?
10. Do you only go to strip clubs or would you also be willing to pay for sex?

Questions for the management:

1. How do you recruit dancers? How do you select the girls who work here? (Is there an audition? What kind of things do you look for in a dancer?)
2. What kind of dancers do you look for? (any specific nationality, body type, etc..)
3. Do you give the dancers any training?
4. Who are normally the "best" dancers? What makes them good?
5. How do you make sure the dancers are safe and the customers follow the rules? What if the customers break the rules?
6. What kind of clientèle does this club have? Who would be the ideal customer?