

**WHITE SLAVERY RECONFIGURED: THE “NATASHA  
TRADE” AND SEXUALIZED NATIONALISM IN CANADA**

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## Abstract

*White Slavery Reconfigured: The “Natasha Trade” and Sexualized Nationalism in Canada* examines the role the figure of the post-socialist migrant exotic dancer has occupied in debates on human trafficking policies in Canada and seeks to centre race, ethnicity, and nation within discourses on sex trafficking. The international Natasha discourse relays narratives of impoverished and innocent Central or Eastern European women trafficked into the sex trade by organized criminals. This narrative found expression in policy debates surrounding human trafficking and the temporary work permit for foreign workers during the years 2004 – 2007. This study finds that the post-socialist female subject appeared as a contemporary reconfiguration of the historical white slave in discourses on sex trafficking. Fears about victimized white femininity and foreign threats present in government discourse gesture to the importance of white female bodies to the stability of national boundaries. Fears about violation of white femininity speak to a desire to protect the whiteness of the nation that is visible in both historical and contemporary discourses. This dissertation engages with two geo-temporal categories, the West (North America/Canada) and the post-socialist (Central and Eastern Europe and Russia), and illustrates how the post-socialist was invented as a peripheral, tradition-bound geo-temporal space that permitted parliamentarians to position West/Canada as progressive, modern, and as a leader in the struggle against “modern day slavery.” Expressions of sexuality and nationalism in government discourse constituted a form of Canadian sexualized nationalism where notions of progressiveness and civilizational superiority became linked to a gender egalitarian enlightened masculinity and where buying sex became coded as “un-Canadian” in its disregard for women’s equality. This

project is situated within the transnational feminist paradigm, but intervenes into transnational scholarship by employing Madina Tlostanova's decolonial framework centred on Eurasia as a method to re-consider established frames of thinking within transnational feminist thought. Analyzing how the post-socialist is configured in narratives of human trafficking shows the role the post-socialist continues to play in producing categories of "us and them" that are entwined with modern, emancipatory rhetoric of "victims and saviours." The presence of nationalism and imperialism within discourses of human trafficking in Canada may point to linkages between the contemporary anti-trafficking infrastructure and the rise of novel articulations of nationalism, exclusions, and xenophobia within Europe and North America.

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## Introduction

In some parts of the world ... women from Russia and other republics of the former Soviet Union are so prevalent, that prostitutes are called ‘Natashas’ (Hughes 2000, 3).

It didn’t matter whether they were from Russia, Moldova, Romania or Ukraine. In the eyes of the men, they were all Russian. Even stranger was the way many of the men addressed them. ‘They called us Natasha. They never asked our real names. To them, we were all Natashas’ (Malarek 2003, xvi).

This study examines discourses on “sex trafficking”<sup>1</sup> of women from post-socialist European countries in government discourse in Canada in relation to the work permit for foreign exotic dancers, and argues that the figure of the Natasha – the post-socialist female victim of sex trafficking – emerged as a contemporary reconfiguration of the nineteenth century white slave within the Canadian context. The Natasha discourse present in Canadian debates closely resembles the white slavery narrative of the nineteenth century that Jo Doezema contends has re-emerged in contemporary discourses on trafficking in women (Doezema 2000, 2010). This study builds on scholarship exploring nationalist and imperialist concerns involved in the white slave narrative (Doezema 2010; Guy 1991; Valverde 1991) and argues that nationalism, imperialism, and whiteness remain salient in contemporary discourses of sex trafficking in Canada. Jennifer Suchland (2015) explains that fears about sexual violence against post-socialist

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<sup>1</sup> I explain my use of the term “sex trafficking” in Chapter 1.

women were a central concern in galvanizing the contemporary international legal response to human trafficking. This dissertation takes the perspective that threats to white women specifically remain central in contemporary concerns about sex trafficking and to mobilizing institutional responses in the Canadian context despite recent concerns over sex trafficking of racialized and Indigenous women (See for example, Sikka 2009).

The importance of examining questions of race and nationalism in discourses on sex trafficking cannot be overstated given urgent contemporary concerns surrounding migration. The inability of European countries to reach consensus on accommodating the mass movement of migrants from Syria and neighbouring countries has threatened the cohesion of the European Union.<sup>2</sup> Far right-parties and politicians have made advances in both Western and Central and Eastern Europe as well as the in the United States. France recently dismantled the migrant settlement in Calais, the culmination of years of tension and a symbolic display of reticence toward the acceptance of more refugees and fears over the preservation of French identity. Razor wire fences, reinforced by military presence, have been built along Hungary's<sup>3</sup> border with Croatia. American President Donald Trump incorporated anti-immigrant and Islamophobic discourses into mainstream political debate, which was reproduced in Canada when Conservative leadership candidate Dr. Kellie Leitch proposed a Canadian values test be administered to new immigrants.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> BBC News, "Migrant Crisis Threatens EU Cohesion, Warn Tusk and Shultz," *BBC News*, October 27, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34648574> (accessed January 6, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> BBC News, "Hungary Races to Build Border Fence as Migrants Keep Coming," *BBC News*, August 6, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-33802453> (accessed January 6, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Tony Keller, "Kellie Leitch: Xenophobia Doesn't Have to be a Conservative Value," *Globe and Mail*, September 7, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/kellie-leitch-xenophobia-doesnt-have-to-be-a-conservative-value/article31750423/> (accessed October 25, 2016).



Alongside the development of the trafficking industrial complex (Chaung 2013) and the multi-million dollar rescue industry (Agustín 2007) there has also been – evident in the events described above – the troubling intensification of nationalism, xenophobia, and racism.<sup>5</sup> Doezema’s (2010) insight that human trafficking narratives are able to accommodate and provide a powerful vehicle for the advancement of varied and competing ideologies serves as a caution as we witness the entrenchment of a prosecutorially-oriented, international anti-trafficking infrastructure which takes aim at those marginalized within neoliberal capitalism. The data in this study suggest that human trafficking policies, rather than protect those vulnerable to the worst forms of economic exploitation and violence, serve to protect whiteness from threats posed by those at the borders of legitimate social and economic institutions.

The transnational feminist literature on migration for sex work and human trafficking has not fully engaged with questions related to nationalism, race, sexuality, or ethnicization in relation to post-socialist female subjects and post-socialist spaces despite the protection of whiteness and racial purity being crucial concerns in narratives of trafficking in women historically (Valverde 1991). This dissertation begins to address this lacuna by looking to the Canadian context as a site to conceptualize the role post-socialist women and countries have played in contemporary narratives on sex trafficking. Thus, this study is concerned with the specific forms of ethnosexualization of white, post-socialist women in the Canadian context, and will consider this in relation to the importance of white femininity, maintenance of national boundaries, nationalism, and

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<sup>5</sup> Luke Baker and Stephen Adler, “‘Nationalism and Xenophobia’ on Rise Ahead of European Elections,” *Reuters*, October 30, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-parliament-elections-idUSBRE99T0YZ20131030> (accessed January 6, 2016).

imperialism historically within narratives of trafficking in women and in representations of Eastern Europe in the Western imagination.

Using a critical discourse analysis (van Dijk 1993, 2008), the primary data analyzed in this study is government discourse: debate in the House of Commons and Senate, committee reports and evidence, and legislative summaries relating to temporary work permit for foreign exotic dancers. The data also includes discourses from other influential actors, such as the journalist Victor Malarek, who have played a significant role in policy-making. Beginning in 2002, the Government of Canada has amended domestic policies to bring them into line with international law against trafficking in persons (the U.N. Protocol), such as the criminalization of domestic human trafficking, the prohibition on granting of work permits for jobs in sex-related businesses, and an official denouncement of international sex trafficking, all policy debates examined in this study.

The central research question guiding this study is in what ways can the Natasha discourse be understood as a contemporary reconfiguration of the nineteenth century myth of white slavery in the Canadian context, with the Natasha figure being an updated white slave? To this end, describing the specific forms of ethnosexualization of post-socialist subjects and spaces has been a central task. Examining the positioning of white, post-socialist female subjects has provided insight into the relevance of whiteness in contemporary discourses on sex trafficking in Canada, suggesting that protection of white women and human trafficking policies remain linked in ways conditioned by early international agreements on trafficking in women which took white women as their focus.

In the Canadian context, post-socialist female subjects were conceptualized through the international Natasha discourse and were rendered as innocents in need of protection, their whiteness contributing to their positioning as legitimate victims. There was a heightened concern on the part of policymakers about the victimization of this particular group of women, although largely unsubstantiated and disproportionate in relation to the number of foreign exotic dancers in Canada on temporary work permits which was small compared to other foreign workers. I argue that the whiteness of the women themselves rendered their experiences of violence visible and of concern to policymakers, who at times referred to this group as “white slaves.” Sensationalism often characterized the debate on the “sexual slavery” of Eastern European exotic dancers in government discourse as well as that on sex trafficking more generally. Yet, like the historical white slave, the post-socialist exotic dancer was an ambiguous subject and uncertainties regarding her culpability – whether or not she was a “real” victim – were never completely foreclosed. The post-socialist female subject was never fully delinked from fears of the criminality of post-socialist male subjects, who were positioned in discourse as criminal, violent, and misogynist.

This ambiguous positioning and linkage between victimization and criminality remains important. Throughout, concerns over vulnerable and victimized sex trafficked women became intertwined with concerns over various threats and forms of criminality. I argue that discourses of violence against women were suffused with anti-immigrant sentiments, where sexual harm became seen as a problem of foreign threats and foreign values. Policy solutions to sex trafficking that post-socialist exotic dancers were used to usher in intensified the criminalization of markets in sexual labour by criminalizing

domestic human trafficking, limited avenues for women's independent migration by excluding dancers from obtaining work permits, and targeted traffickers as abusers of the immigration system. While fear over violated white femininity animated these debates, the policy solutions offered targeted those operating outside of legitimate economic and migration systems.

The dualism between both post-socialist female and male subjects as well as between Canadian national and post-socialist spaces enabled an imperialistic rhetoric of victims and saviours, positioning Canada as a site of civilizational superiority. Through discourses of alterity-making, post-socialist space was represented as dysfunctional, abject, and non-Western. The Canadian national subject and by extension community was positioned in relation as progressive and enlightened, empowered to save the vulnerable from harm. In this manner, notions of progress and civilizational superiority became linked to notions about protecting women from harm and gender egalitarianism.

This study shows the development of a Canadian sexualized nationalism where Canadian progressiveness and civilizational superiority became linked to a gender egalitarian enlightened masculinity. Prostitution became coded as an activity out of step with gender egalitarianism, and commercial sex and the figure of the sex purchaser seen as harmful to women, the latter representative of subaltern forms of masculinity that the Canadian male subject was understood to have surmounted. Less progressive forms of masculinity were linked to subaltern masculinities and foreign values that devalue women, feeding imperialistic notions of Canada as a site of progressiveness. This trend can be seen in Conservative MP Joy Smith's report on prostitution law reform when she states that buying sex is not a Canadian value (2014, 16).

Constructions of white femininity, signalled by references to beauty, innocence, and purity, remain critical to conceptualizing the harms of sex trafficking. Older notions of white slavery, where the victimization of white women was foregrounded, have not lost their relevance in contemporary times in Canada. I argue that fears of victimization of white women played a role in mobilizing the policy responses of the Government of Canada as it was when foreign exotic dancers began to arrive from Eastern Europe that concerns about human trafficking began to emerge (Canada 2007b, 5) even though exotic dancers from Latin America preceded the Central and Eastern Europeans and likewise experienced similar working conditions in the clubs (LACEV 2002).

Drawing on the scholarship of Elizabeth Bernstein (2010), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2013), and David Theo Goldberg (2009), this dissertation also offers a commentary on the sexual and racial politics of neoliberalism, arguing that sex trafficking must be considered in relation to the interests of the neoliberal state in the smooth operation of capital accumulation and to exclude outsiders who are seen to be too “risky” in political or economic terms (Goldberg 2009). Government discourses examined in this study espouse a conservative sexual politics offering women few legitimate sexual roles aside from those within the private family household. The mainstream violence against women approach to anti-trafficking expressed by policymakers in Canada has elided questions relating to class and redistribution, instead imaging justice for women in terms of protection by carceral systems and insertion into legitimate social and economic institutions (Bernstein 2010, 2014).

## **Dissertation Overview**

Chapter 1 will introduce the policy story surrounding the temporary work permit for foreign exotic dancers and Canada's legal framework for human trafficking. Following this, I will describe the critical discursive methodological approach of this project. Lastly, I will outline my use of "Natasha" and present an alternative to the dominant paradigm of human trafficking implicit in the international Natasha discourse emerging from sex worker-led organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. This is the only inclusion in this study of sex worker voices, yet is nevertheless important for the alternative perspective that it offers.

Chapter 2 outlines the central theoretical and thematic components of this dissertation, including theoretical frameworks on sex work and the transnational feminist paradigm. This chapter also addresses some limitations of the transnational paradigm for theorizing the post-socialist difference, as well as where Eurasia and post-socialism can contribute to the transnational dialogue through the use of a decolonial framework proposed by Madina Tlostanova (2010). The themes introduced in this chapter, which are woven throughout this study, are those of whiteness and neoliberal capitalism as well as sexualized nationalism. Here, I describe the theorization of whiteness used in this study, and describe the linkage of contemporary forms of Canadian nationalism with notions of a gender egalitarian masculinity.

In Chapter 3, I present a review of the literature on post-socialist sex trafficking from transnational feminist scholars, including some scholarship from other feminist traditions that intersect with the transnational paradigm. This chapter seeks to highlight the tensions between structure and agency in the literature on post-socialist sex

trafficking, and describes points of convergence and divergence between radical and materialist feminism in relation to the transnational approach. I also offer a critical reading of abjection – a concept that appears with some frequency in studies on post-socialist sex trafficking – and argue that it is important to centre sex workers’ subjectivity while taking into account the interaction between structure and agency.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of Victor Malarek’s book *The Natashas*, which was influential in shaping the Canadian discussion on sex trafficking, and also engages with his testimony in the sex trafficking study of 2006. In this chapter, I continue to address the ethnosexualized rendering of post-socialist femininity and draw Canadian national and post-socialist masculinity into relief, highlighting their geopolitical dimensions. In *The Natashas*, the ethical Canadian national subject defends victimized (white) women from corrupt Eastern Europe states and malevolent Eastern European men. This chapter also addresses discourses pathologizing the sex purchaser, and suggests that concerns about sexual harm to women in prostitution are articulated by Malarek through fears of immigration and are rife with anti-immigrant sentiments.

Chapter 5 is the first of two chapters engaging substantively with government discourse between the years 2004 and 2007. This chapter traces the shift from initial hostility toward post-socialist exotic dancers, or “Romanian strippers,” in government debate to their repositioning as victims of sexual slavery. Post-socialist exotic dancers were understood through a variety of discourses and it was not immediately evident that they would be understood as sex slaves rather than undesirable immigrants or workers (albeit illegitimate ones). However, being positioned in relation to the Natasha discourse as well through the white slavery narrative, the women were understood by

parliamentarians as victims in need of protection by the Canadian state. I argue in this chapter that the sexual slavery of post-socialist women emerged as a central frame through which parliamentarians conceptualized the problem of sex trafficking in Canada.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, also analyses government debate and shows how concerns about sex trafficking are informed by nationalist and imperialist understandings. In the context of post-socialist sex trafficking, notions of post-socialist difference contributed to the development of ideas of Canadian civilizational progressiveness and superiority. The form of nationalism in these debates differs from notions of Canadian “goodness,” rather reflecting an aggressive and courageous nationalism, one that is both determined and compassionate. This form of nationalism also contained articulations of a national masculinity that was concerned to protect women from harm and uphold gender egalitarianism, marking national subjects as the legitimate protector of women and children. I also argue that policies ostensibly proposed to protect women were infused with concerns about protecting Canada from criminals and those seeking to exploit the immigration system; thus concerns about protecting women legitimated the exclusion of particular migrants from the national territory.



## **Chapter 1: Setting the Stage: The Sgro Scandal, Human Trafficking Politics, and the Natasha Trade in the Canadian Context**

I would like to ask my colleague from the Liberal Party how he squares the circle of speaking today about trafficking of human beings and introducing legislation to that effect, and the fact that the Government of Canada for years has been pimping for the underworld by bringing Romanian strippers to work in Canadian strip joints (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 8000).

[Young women from former Soviet republics] end up in the clutches of criminal organizations that take away their passports and have well-organized rings forcing them into strip clubs or prostitution (Mr. Richard Marceau, BQ MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 7994).

### **Introduction**

The quotes above come from debate in Parliament, in 2005, on Canada's domestic human trafficking law (Bill C-49). While the Government of Canada had laws against international human trafficking since 2002 when the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) came into force, there was no domestic criminal law on trafficking in persons when the concern about trafficking in foreign exotic dancers emerged. Above, the trafficked "Romanian stripper" is conceptualized in relation to narratives of post-socialist sex trafficking more broadly; the specific example is symptomatic of the larger and grave problem of post-socialist organized crime and sex trafficking. The discursive shifts involving post-socialist foreign exotic dancers that positioned them as trafficked women

will be addressed in detail in Chapter 5; however, here I will introduce or “set the stage” for the policy story that contributed to giving form to Canada’s domestic legal framework on trafficking in persons.

This chapter will begin by reviewing the scandal involving former Liberal Minister of Immigration Judy Sgro, Romanian foreign exotic dancers, the temporary work permit that became erroneously known as the exotic dancer visa program, and offer an overview of Canada’s legal framework governing human trafficking. Following this, I will outline the methodological approach and research design of this study. Next, I will trace the emergence of the Natasha discourse and its geopolitical contours, and offer an alternative to this discourse based in literature from sex worker-led organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia.

Concerns about human trafficking touched upon different countries and groups of women considered to be vulnerable to trafficking, not only Eastern European women.<sup>6</sup> What is remarkable is the high level of concern surrounding this particular group who, in the case of the human trafficking law (Bill C-49), occupied much of the discussion while representing a very small proportion of potential victims of trafficking in Canada. To illustrate, the debate on the human trafficking law in Senate was overwhelmingly concerned with the sex trafficking of Eastern European women, with one of the Senators even comparing Eastern European women’s victimization in the temporary foreign worker program to that of Indigenous victims of the residential school system (Canada 2005, 53). Considering that it was observed by other Members of Parliament that between 600 and 800 hundred foreign exotic dancers could potentially be in situations of

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<sup>6</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7997 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP); (17 October 2005), p. 8624 (Mr. Mark Warawa, CPC MP).

trafficking each year,<sup>7</sup> the level of concern over this particular group of women invites questions about the symbolic value of white female bodies in discourses on sex trafficking and their role in affecting a national legal response.

### **The Sgro Scandal**

In 2004, the issue of work permits for foreign exotic dancers appeared in the House of Commons when Judy Sgro, former Liberal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, became embroiled in a scandal surrounding the granting of a visa extension to a former migrant exotic dancer from Romania who volunteered on her campaign (Canada 2007b, 5). At the time, Prime Minister Paul Martin was leading a Liberal minority government. Sgro was accused of intervening in an immigration case and “giving a Romanian stripper special treatment.”<sup>8</sup> The scandal was dubbed “Strippergate,” connoting illegality and corruption.

In the House of Commons, Sgro was attacked relentlessly by the opposition over what was framed as “fast-trafficking a stripper.”<sup>9</sup> The debate ventured into the absurd when it was suggested that officials had been bullied by criminals to create the so-called program<sup>10</sup> and that Sgro’s senior aide was conspiring with strip club owners to circumvent the immigration system.<sup>11</sup> While Sgro was ultimately cleared of any ethical conflicts in the matter (Office of the Ethics Commissioner 2005), she resigned from Cabinet in January 2005. While the migration of foreign exotic dancers was represented

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<sup>7</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p.10140 (Ms. Meili Faille, BQ MP).

<sup>8</sup> CTV – Canada AM – November 25, 2004. Opposition Demands Immigration Minister Step Aside.

<sup>9</sup> Hubert Bauch, “Never was a Shortage, Strip Club Owners Say: Killing Visa Program will have ‘No Effect’,” *National Post*, sec. A2, December 6, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Fife, “Thugs Prompted Stripper Visas,” *National Post*, sec. A1, December 18, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Fife, “Entrepreneur Sought Help with Visas,” *National Post*, sec. A1, November 25, 2004.

in governmental discourse as something shocking and unseemly, in fact it was nothing new. Exotic dancers had been crossing the border between Canada and the United States since the late 1970s<sup>12</sup> and Latin American women also came in significant numbers (LACEV 2002) before Central and Eastern Europeans.

Owing to the scrutiny directed toward visas for exotic dancers induced by the Sgro scandal, the federal government came under pressure to change regulations that permitted foreign exotic dancers to obtain temporary work permits as this migration was becoming framed in the media increasingly as human trafficking (Durisin and Heynen 2015). Referring to the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation that was proposed to prevent foreign women from being trafficked as exotic dancers, Hon. Andrew Teledgi stated:

A lot of [the demand for this legislation] is driven by the former minister, Judy Sgro, and what was referred to as Strippergate ... The reality was that a person, who happened to be a stripper and who was no longer a stripper, married a Canadian national and asked the minister for a permit so she could remain in the country while her case was being handled. That's essentially what the case was about (Canada 2008, 7).

As I will explain later in this chapter, the legislation was not passed until 2012. In the interim, immigration officials resorted to unofficial and non-transparent measures to ensure fewer dancers obtained work permits, such as refusing visas for lack of related work experience (Canada 2007b).

Post-socialist exotic dancers figured in demands for policy changes related to human trafficking up until 2011, although most of this activity took place between the years 2004 and 2007, the time period explored in this dissertation. It is important to note

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<sup>12</sup> Estanislao Oziwicz, "Foreign Strippers May Face Barriers McDougall Wants to End Special Status," *Globe and Mail*, sec. A1, April 5, 1991.

that much of the data examined in this study was produced during or after 2006 in the context of a federal Conservative majority government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Post-socialist exotic dancers and post-socialist sex trafficking were central concerns during the debates surrounding the criminalization of domestic human trafficking in 2005 and during a study on trafficking carried out by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women in 2006 mandated to draw attention to the problem of sex trafficking in Canada. They also played a role in mobilizing support for MPs Joy Smith and Maria Mourani's motion condemning the international sex trafficking of girls and women in 2007 (Motion M-153), and in attempts between 2007 and 2011 to amend the IRPA to grant immigration officials the ability to deny temporary work permits to applicants who otherwise met the criteria if it was suspected they would be sexually exploited in their jobs (Bills C-57, C-17, C-45, C-56, C-10). The most fulsome debate on this particular legislation took place in 2007 with Bill C-57, although it took until 2012 to pass the legislation and issue ministerial instructions banning temporary foreign workers from coming to Canada to work in sex-related businesses (Canada 2012).

While the exotic dancer visa program issue appeared consistently in policy proposals targeting human trafficking, it was largely a matter of symbolic significance. A newspaper article noted that the annual number of temporary work permits for buskers and entertainers – a category which included exotic dancers – throughout the mid to late 1990s fluctuated between 750 and 1500,<sup>13</sup> a relatively small number. It appears, however,

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<sup>13</sup> Estanislaw Oziewicz, "Canada's Bare Essential," *Globe and Mail*, sec. A14, 2000.

that by 2004 significantly fewer foreign exotic dancers were obtaining visas. In 2004, 423 work permit and work permit extensions were granted, in 2006 there were seventeen (Canada 2007b, 6), and in 2007 there were only twenty-one work permits granted for exotic dancers (Canada 2008, 3). The data suggests that foreign exotic dancers represented a very small proportion of all temporary workers, and that very few foreign exotic dancers arrived or remained in Canada beyond 2004. As MP Bill Siksay accurately observed during debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation, the policy proposal is “moralistic legislation that bandies about the pejorative term ‘strippers’ as a way of mobilizing support for something that is really only a small part of the problem.”<sup>14</sup>

The matter of post-socialist exotic dancers was a regional issue centered in southern Ontario in the cities of Toronto, Niagara Falls, and Windsor. An RCMP report on human trafficking notes that foreign exotic dancers were also present in Montréal, the Moncton area, and Halifax (RCMP 2010), although this was not reflected in government debate nor in existing research where only Toronto was named directly (Law 2012; Macklin 2003; McDonald, Moore, and Timoshkina 2000; McDonald and Timoshkina 2007; Nagy n.d.). The RCMP report documented circumstances of deceit and involvement of organized crime with exotic dancers arriving from the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, but noted “complaints of human trafficking reported in the last few years were mostly unfounded” (RCMP 2010, 19) and that human trafficking allegations emerging from foreign exotic dancers had their origins in unsatisfactory work conditions and types of economic exploitation. The report noted the women “were not forced to

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<sup>14</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10168 (Mr. Bill Siksay, NDP MP).

perform any other sex acts [aside from voluntary work as exotic dancers] and were able to send money home to Romania” (Ibid., 20). Other accounts, such as Timea Nagy’s (n.d.) memoir recounting her experience as a trafficked foreign exotic dancer from Hungary as well as McDonald and Timoshkina’s (2007) research suggest, however, that there may have been instances where dancers experienced deceit, limitations on their mobility, and were forced or coerced into providing sexual services.

Some parliamentarians, particularly from the NDP, did attempt to discuss working conditions in strip clubs through a labour framework<sup>15</sup> and there was a sex work as labour discourse present at times in these debates;<sup>16</sup> such alternative understandings were available yet they did not succeed in becoming the preferred framing of the issue. The discourse that was ultimately taken-up into policy making was the violence against women framing that conflated human trafficking and sex work. Parliamentarians mistakenly attributed deplorable working conditions to trafficking alone rather than an absence of occupational health and safety standards and dancers’ inability to access labour rights common in the sex sector overall. While there were serious human and labour rights concerns for post-socialist migrant exotic dancers and other sex workers, the RCMP report did not support the understanding that developed in Parliament and fuelled by Victor Malarek that saw all foreign exotic dancers as trafficked women.

Reliance in the governmental context on anecdotal stories about the victimization of Central and Eastern European women by organized criminals, such as anecdotes from Malarek’s *The Natashas* which appeared with surprisingly regularity, not to mention the

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<sup>15</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10143 (Ms. Libby Davies, NDP MP).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

casting of foreign exotic dancers as “white slaves” by some parliamentarians,<sup>17</sup> suggests that the white slavery narrative was a constitutive element in the conceptualization of post-socialist sex trafficking in the Canadian context. This narrative draws upon specific ethnic, racial, and nationalist understandings that align with international concerns regarding the threat of transnational organized crime stemming from post-socialist regions. As I will show in Chapter 5, it was not immediate that post-socialist migrant exotic dancers became understood as trafficked women; it was the Sgro scandal and the issue of visas for post-socialist exotic dancers that ushered concerns about post-socialist sex trafficking into the governmental context.

### **Canada’s Legal Framework for Human Trafficking and the Work Permit for Foreign Exotic Dancers**

The policy debates on human trafficking that post-socialist exotic dancers were drawn into show a pre-occupation with the victimization of white women from post-socialist countries that mirrors concerns circulating in the international context. There has been little attention paid to interconnections between the international Natasha discourse, which played a critical role in forging the international legal response to trafficking, and the Canadian discussion on human trafficking. Beginning in the 1990s, the Natasha discourse echoed globally and galvanized an international response to perceived threats about transnational organized crime emerging from former Soviet states (Suchland 2015). Kamala Kempadoo observes that it was when white, European women started to be found in large numbers in the sex sector that earlier concerns about trafficking in women that

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<sup>17</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 8029 (Mr. Guy André, BQ MP); (26 September 2005), p. 7994 (Mr. Vic Toews, CPC MP).



Third World feminists<sup>18</sup> had been trying to draw attention to that the contemporary international legal response developed (Kempadoo 2002, 16). Jennifer Suchland (2015) argues that it was politics surrounding the end of the Cold War that conditioned the emergence of renewed concerns about human trafficking which led to the development of the most recent international legal response to trafficking, the U.N. Protocol. In her understanding, it was the threat of transnational organized crime from post-socialist countries that animated concerns over trafficking in women.

A similar shift in focus can be observed in the Canadian context. It was when women from Central and Eastern European countries began to migrate to work as exotic dancers that a paradigm shift was triggered domestically. The legislative summary for Bill C-57<sup>19</sup> stated, “by the late 1990s, when far greater numbers [of exotic dancers] were arriving from Eastern Europe, concerns about human trafficking began to emerge” (Canada 2007b, 5). Concerns about victimized white women in forced prostitution by organized criminals occupied a significant space in legitimating demands for criminal laws to punish traffickers in the name of protecting women and children.

Canada was one of several states that participated in the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which convened in Vienna in 1998 to develop a new legal instrument to combat organized crime under which human trafficking law was subsumed. While Anne Gallagher (2001) observes that a major impetus behind such efforts was sovereignty and security issues on the part of

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<sup>18</sup> In using the language of “Third World feminists,” I follow Kamala Kempadoo’s (1998) approach of using “Third World” to align with understandings given by “Third World feminists,” which is “the notion of a collectivity whose lives are conditioned and shaped by the struggles against neo-colonialism and imperialism, capitalism and gender subordination” (p. 24).

<sup>19</sup> Bill C-57 was a proposed amendment to the IRPA to protect foreign workers from exploitation, particularly exotic dancers (Canada 2007b, 5).

wealthier states, it is also important to note that countries from the global South, global North, and former Soviet territories all participated in this process, including Romania, the Russian Federation, Bulgaria, and Poland (U.N. General Assembly 1998).

In December 2000, Canada was one of the first eighty countries to sign the United Nations Trafficking Protocol (U.N. Protocol) in Palermo, Italy, the culmination of two years of negotiations. Shortly thereafter, on June 28, 2002, Canada's new immigration legislation, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), came into force, including a new law against trafficking in persons (S. 118). In 2005, ostensibly owing to pressures from various national and international NGOs (Millar and O'Doherty 2015), Bill C-49 was passed which made amendments to the Criminal Code and created laws against human trafficking *within* Canadian territory (S. 279.01 – 279.05).

I will elaborate below on the significance of the United States' Trafficking in Persons report on a global scale. It holds relevance for the development of Canada's response to human trafficking even while it did not bear specifically on the 2005 human trafficking law. In the 2003 Trafficking in Persons report, Canada was demoted to Tier 2 status meaning that it did not comply with the minimum standards to eliminate trafficking as understood by the United States (U.S. Department of State 2003). It is unclear to what extent this ranking affected parliamentarians debating Canada's human trafficking law in 2005. It is clear, however, that they are aware of its significance. Honourable Larry Bagnell explains during debate on Bill C-49:

[The] continuing efforts by Canada to strengthen our responses to human trafficking are recognized internationally as well. For example, in the June annual 'Trafficking in Persons Report' by the United States Department of Congress, which was mentioned in the debate earlier today, Canada's top tier one ranking was maintained, reflecting full compliance with minimum standards

set by the United States to assess other countries' efforts addressing prevention, protection and prosecution (Hon. Larry Bagnell, Lib MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 8030).

Speaking in the Senate on Canada – U.S. relations and the 2005 Trafficking in Persons report, Senator Di Nino makes similar remarks:

Although the U.S. State Department has been critical of our country's efforts against human trafficking in recent years, this year's report moves Canada back into the highest tier of compliance for the elimination of trafficking. However, the State Department continues to be critical of our government on several different fronts, including the low number of prosecutions and convictions of traffickers, the lack of coordination and data collection on the victims, and the controversial exotic dancer visa program, which the report notes has not been entirely suspended (Hon. Consiglio Di Nino, Senator CPC, *Debates of the Senate*. Canada, 14 June 2005, 1453).

It appears unlikely that Canada's demotion to Tier Two status in 2003 directly influenced the development of the 2005 human trafficking law; however it is evident that the United States' assessment of Canada's attempts to address human trafficking were significant concerns for Canadian politicians.

Historically, the crossing of international borders has been central to definitions of human trafficking, and the change ushered in by the 2005 human trafficking law expanded the state's ability to define movement within Canadian borders as trafficking while, in the context of prostitution, also producing overlap between trafficking and procuring offenses (Roots 2013). In Canada, the U.N. Protocol, Section 118 of the IRPA, and Sections 279.01 – 279.05 of the Criminal Code comprise the overarching legal framework governing human trafficking. Canada also made significant amendments to domestic prostitution laws by criminalizing the purchase of sexual services in 2014, a

decision which was made in reference to the international effort to combat trafficking in persons and which noted the success of the Swedish approach (Canada 2014).

It would be remiss not to mention the significance of the United States' influence on anti-trafficking policy on an international level. While a domestic law, the United State's Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) has positioned the United States as the world's "global sheriff" (Chuang 2006, 439), assessing each country's performance according to the U.S. Government's standards for eliminating trafficking in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report. As Janie Chuang (2006) and others have observed (See: Ditmore 2012), the TVPA has remarkable extraterritorial reach and has affected international anti-trafficking policy throughout the world as the U.S. government is empowered to impose sanctions on non-compliant countries which, in practice according to Chuang, has been effective in compelling the development of anti-trafficking laws and policies. It is worth noting that the Trafficking in Persons Report for the years 2005 through 2008 each included remarks about the work permit for exotic dancers in Canada's annual report. The 2005 and 2006 reports linked the temporary work permit to the trafficking and abuse of Romanian exotic dancers in particular (U.S. Department of State 2005, 2006). In a very real sense, then, the matter of work permits for foreign exotic dancers was an element in the international concern about sex trafficking emerging from post-socialist states more generally.

### **Methodological Approach and Research Design**

This study explores the positioning of post-socialist women in government discourse and expressions of sexualized nationalism in the Canadian context, and seeks to

put forward an analysis highlighting the importance of whiteness in discourses on sex trafficking. While transnational feminist scholars have intervened into feminist theorizing on prostitution by highlighting the significance of race, global political economy, citizenship, and migration in theories of sex work and human trafficking, researchers have paid less attention to the nuances of how white women positioned as non-Western are located within the sex sector and how their experiences are represented. As Western theorizations of prostitution have centred the experiences of white, Western women, critical engagement with representations of subaltern white femininity lends insight into meanings associated with whiteness and white femininity in discourses on trafficking and prostitution.

This study draws on the principles of critical discourse analysis (van Dijk 1993, 2008) including an explicit socio-political stance grounded in concerns emerging from the global sex workers movement and a focus on dominance relationships within institutions and from elite actors, both of which have the ability to control social representations (van Dijk 1993). Teun van Dijk (1993) holds that the powerful social actors are able to control and influence social representations; their power is their ability to access discourse. This use of discourse in this dissertation differs from a Foucauldian approach. Michel Foucault's approach sees discourse as a set of structures and practices that give form to knowledge through, for instance, particular types of exclusions (Mills 2003). While Foucault is interested in the relation between discourse, discursive formations, and power, the concern in van Dijk's approach is the content of specific utterances and their relationship to the power of specific groups and institutions, rather than the system through which they are produced. I draw on elements of Foucault's

understanding of discourse in reference to individualizable groups of statements (Ibid.), such as the international Natasha discourse or discourses on sex trafficking.

Following van Dijk's understanding, as powerful social actors, the level of access to discourse government actors would have is very high as is their legitimacy, and thus they are able to manipulate and influence social representations. The exercise of power occurs through this management of social representations, that is shared knowledge, understandings, norms and beliefs (1993). For van Dijk, it is such social cognitions, these shared and assumed understandings, that form the link between dominance as an exercise of power and discourse (Ibid.). Thus, the job of critical discourse analysis is to describe, explain, and critique "the ways dominant discourses (indirectly) influence such socially shared knowledge" (1993, 258) in ways that legitimate abuses or violate the principles of democracy, equality, and justice (Ibid., 255).

My overarching interest is to identify and analyze what van Dijk calls macrosemantics, or topics, within Canadian government and elite discourses of the temporary work permit for post-socialist migrant exotic dancers. At the macro-level, representations of topics (or themes) are reflective of norms and values (van Dijk 1993). In this study, my approach to identifying overarching topics or themes is shaped by William A. Gamson's (1992) ideas about "framing," which refers to an implicit organizing idea. This is reflected in my use of differing frames, such as the dominant framework on human trafficking or the violence against women paradigm, to describe the ideas that appear in discourse. I am interested in overall concepts and beliefs that emerge within discourse and their relationship to dominance.

Before engaging with primary data, I searched for literature on the topics of post-socialist migrant exotic dancers in Canada and on post-socialist migrant sex workers from within the transnational feminist paradigm. My initial search for literature was carried out during July 2014 using the Women's Studies International, Sociological Abstracts, and Worldwide Political Science Abstracts databases. I used a variety of combinations of search terms using the following descriptors: prostitution, sex work\*, Europe, Europe, East\*, Eastern Europe, Russia, exotic danc\*, stripping, migration, immigration, trafficking. My second search, carried out during November 2015, used the same databases and terms; however, they included the following descriptors as well: Eurasia, postcommunis\*, postsocialis\*, and post soviet. I also searched the York University library catalogue, bibliographies of books and journal articles, and thesis and dissertation indexes to locate additional materials.

I limited my second search by setting filters for results dated from 2004 onward, ten years from the date of my initial searches, with the intention of focusing most closely on literature from the past five years (i.e. from 2009). The motivation for selecting this time frame was an interest to find the more recent literature on the subject, which also happened to correspond to the years during which discussion of the exotic dancer visa in Canada reached its apex. However, as I progressed in my review of the literature, I recognized that an engagement with earlier empirical and theoretical research was needed to form an understanding of how transnational feminist thinking on trafficking in women has taken shape since the early 1990s (Brussa 1992; Lim 1998; Truong 1990; Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997) and how to situate concerns about trafficking of post-socialist women in relation to this longer history.

The primary data for this study is comprised of government discourse on the matter of Romanian dancers and post-socialist dancers more generally. While the issue appeared for the first time in 2004 in the House of Commons and was not connected to any policy proposals, over time the discursive framing of the Romanian stripper in government debate shifted to mirror the international Natasha discourse that had been present in the European context since the late 1990s and early 2000s (Hughes 2000).

As described already, “the Romanian/post-socialist migrant exotic dancer” later appeared in policy debates related to: the human trafficking law (Bill C-49) in 2005; in testimony during the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women’s sex trafficking study in 2006; during debate on Motion M-153 to condemn international sex trafficking in 2006 and 2007; and during debate of the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation (Bills C-57, C-17, C-45, C-56, C-10) between the years 2007 and 2011. Parliamentary debate, committee reports, committee evidence, and legislative summaries linked to these policies and studies make-up the primary data for this study.

My initial interest in this study was to learn how post-socialist women were positioned within government discourse relating to the temporary work permit for foreign exotic dancers, and I developed an analysis of the data described above in Excel spreadsheets. I began my research with an analysis of media stories on the work permit for exotic dancers (which is not included in this dissertation), then developed an analysis of Victor’s Malarek’s *The Natashas*, and finally analyzed the government discourse. I organized the text into categories reflecting how post-socialist feminine and masculine subjects were positioned in the data as well as documenting the presence of “radical feminist” or anti-prostitution discourses (which I later modified to the “violence against



women” paradigm). The initial categories of analysis employed were: Eastern European (EE) women; EE sex workers as victims; EE sex workers as agents; EE exotic dancers as victims; EE exotic dancers as workers; EE exotic dancers and criminality; EE exotic dancers and prostitution; EE exotic dancers as undesirable members of the Canadian nation; radical feminism.

I created another spreadsheet to explore the subtexts that I saw within Malarek’s writing that were not fully captured in my first spreadsheet using these categories: gender ideology and the state; gender ideology and EE women; gender ideology and masculinity; pathologization of clients; EE states and abjection.

As I spent more time with the data, I found that the initial set of categories I developed was not adequately capturing latent elements within the parliamentary debates, particularly that of Canadian nationalism. Generally, explicit expressions of sexism or other types of exclusions (ethnicizations, biases, and so forth) evident in Malarek’s text *The Natasha’s* were not apparent within governmental discourse. For example, Malarek’s depiction of Eastern European men as sleazy, Mafiosi-types was uncommon in government discourse where a similar sentiment may be expressed in terms of differing cultural values regarding women.

I reviewed the government discourse again, coding for expressions of “nationalism,” “Canadian values,” “foreign values,” and “imperial attitude.” Lastly, through this process, it emerged that the Natasha discourse was itself a category of analysis within the debate, and I again revisited debates coding for the Natasha discourse. The process of analysis was iterative and unfolding, and developed as I saw new themes emerge within the data. These final two approaches to coding and analysis were the most

productive as it was through these exercises that I was able to develop the central arguments of this study relating to white female victims, Canadian saviours with enlightened sexual ethics, and foreign threats emanating from regions of the world seen to be tradition-bound and out of step with modernity.

### **The “Natasha” Figure: A Contemporary White Slave from a Subaltern Empire**

Within government discourse, the post-socialist was positioned in the Canadian imaginary as a non-Western location and associated with criminality, dysfunction, and unequal gender relations. Sex trafficking was conceptualized through temporal categories where the world was imagined as divided into modernity (the West) and those outside of modernity aligned with tradition and backwardness. While Central and Eastern European women were positioned as innocent victims, they were likewise also connected to post-socialist criminality and corruption. Audrey Macklin writes “the exotic dancer visa was [viewed as] both a conduit to the unlawful side of the sex trade for the women involved, as well as a chink in Canada’s border armour ... permitting other forms of international organized crime to infiltrate” (2003, 481). During the 2004 to 2005 period, debates in Parliament showed considerable ambiguity and even hostility toward Romanian foreign exotic dancers that later subsided as the women’s position as victims of trafficking concretized. While post-socialist women were often caricaturized as innocent “Natasha”-figures in a manner mirroring the white slave, the specificity of the post-socialist context contributed ideas of criminality that persisted within the government discourse.

Scholarship engaging with questions of sex trafficking from post-socialist Europe highlights the complexities involved in developing adequate definitions to describe the

geographic region as well as the figure of the Natasha. One of the earliest studies in feminist literature describing the Natasha trade by Donna Hughes (2000) positions the Natasha figure foremost as Ukrainian or Russian, but also mentions former Soviet republics such as Belarus and Latvia. Leyla Gülçür and Pinar İlkaracan (2002) link the Natasha figure in Turkey with the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; interestingly, they include a quote from a sex worker from Kazakhstan in their article, one of the only times Central Asia was mentioned in the literature reviewed. A more recent example of academic literature engaging with Natasha is that of John Davies (2009) who observes that Albanian sex workers in France were represented as Natashas in Western European media (Davies 2009, 122-23). The most recent example is Suchland (2015) who describes Natasha as a Slavic woman from the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc.

In the Canadian context, Lynn McDonald, Brooke Moore, and Natalya Timoshkina (2000) describe the experiences of Slavic women from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In a later publication drawing on the same data (McDonald and Timoshkina 2007), the language shifted slightly to include “former Eastern bloc” and “Communist bloc” in addition to the others, and named the following countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Ukraine. Victor Malarek, in *The Natashas* (2003), links the Natasha trade to the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and what were at the time called the Newly Independent States (NIS) or the former Soviet republics. In the context of Canadian parliamentary debate on sex trafficking and post-socialist Europe, a variety of countries were mentioned: Hungary and Romania,<sup>20</sup> the Soviet Union,<sup>21</sup> Eastern Europe,<sup>22</sup> the Eastern Bloc, Moldova,<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (27 September 2005), p. 8106 (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP).

Ukraine, Slovenia,<sup>24</sup> and Russia.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note, however, that the initial concern in the government discourse centred specifically on Romanian women, and that Russia was conspicuously absent from accusations of sex trafficking in the debates examined.<sup>26</sup>

Considering the salience of Russia to the international Natasha discourse, the near absence of Russia from the Canadian discussion is noteworthy and represents a point of divergence from international discourse. During the time period covered in this dissertation, Canada entered into a number of bilateral agreements with Russia and it appears there was an interest in fostering the appearance of a healthy diplomatic relationship, if not forging one in earnest. In 2006, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper met with President Vladimir Putin in St. Petersburg to sign the Joint Policy Statement on Canada-Russia Relations and Joint Statement on Canada-Russia Energy Cooperation, which set out the terms of a relationship between major Canadian and Russia gas producers.<sup>27</sup> In 2007, the Joint Statement on Russian-Canadian Economic Cooperation was adopted and the first-ever Russia-Canada Business Summit was held in Ottawa in March of that year. In 2009, Canada and Russia made changes to the Bilateral Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement to facilitate the trade in uranium.<sup>28</sup> It appears there may

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<sup>21</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7997 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8628 (Mr. Marc Lemany, BQ MP); (17 October 2005), p. 8633 (Hon. Keith Martin, Lib MP).

<sup>24</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5870 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP); (8 December 2006), p. 5871 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).

<sup>25</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5876 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

<sup>26</sup> It may be that Parliamentarians were reluctant to implicate Russia directly, and opted rather to make accusations against weaker states that lacked the geopolitical power of Russia.

<sup>27</sup> President of Russia, "Vladimir Putin met with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper," President of Russia, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/35919> (accessed June 4, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, "Russian-Canadian Economic Cooperation," The Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, <http://canada.mid.ru/web/canada-en/economic-and-trade-cooperation> (accessed June 4, 2017).

have been a diplomatic interest in avoiding heavy-handed critique of Russia as Canada's economic interests became more closely intertwined with Russia during this period.

The Natasha figure is utilized in academic research in an imprecise way to refer to any female victim of sex trafficking from Russia, the former Eastern Bloc, or areas under Soviet political or Russian cultural dominance and is productive of specific racial and ethnic understandings. Telling is what this discourse marginalizes – former Soviet Republics in Central Asia that are Russian-speaking yet predominantly Muslim and whose indigenous populations may be non-white (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan). This shows the Natasha discourse to be one that racializes and ethnicizes its subjects as white, Slavic, and Christian, erasing racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious variations within the region and fuelling concerns about violence directed against white, Christian female bodies. The figure of Natasha as the exemplar for victims of sex trafficking from post-socialist Europe obscures the existence and experiences of a large number of sex workers, specifically those from Eurasia.

The emergence of the Natasha discourse is also connected to the historical specificity of the post-socialist context in relation to Western Europe. Larry Wolff (1994) shows that there is a long history through which Russia and Eastern Europe have been constructed as different and “backward” in relation to Western Europe. This dissertation follows Viatcheslav Morozov's (2013) understanding of Russia as a subaltern empire as it has been both a colonial and imperial power and been colonized by Western modernity. Morozov (2013) calls for a relational approach to postcolonial theory, Russia, and the West, one that recognizes Russia as an imperial power and occupier of Eastern European countries but that is also situated in relation to Western normative superiority. My

approach to theorizing how the post-socialist has been positioned in government discourse draws on elements of postcolonial theories (McClintock 1995; Razack 2004) to highlight these regions' specificity in relation to the West but avoids replicating the postcolonial dialogue between the imperial Europe and its former colonies.

A factor informing the emergence of the Natasha discourse are existing cultural prejudices in relation to Russia and the former Soviet Union as well as Cold War politics that see these regions as less-European spaces. Suchland concludes that in the cultural envisioning of Cold War culture in the West, Soviet life and sexual practices were represented as repressed, ignorant, and excessive (2015). This is also a factor conditioning the representation of the Natasha figure. The example she offers to illustrate this is American documentary explaining Soviet's women's vulnerability to trafficking that featured 'a Soviet woman so oblivious to her body that she did not realize she was pregnant until the baby started to kick' (Ibid., 65).

### **Where are the Voices of Sex Workers from Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia?**

Migrant sex workers have been represented as victims and lacking agency in both mainstream (Kristoff and WuDunn 2009; Malarek 2003) and feminist literature on prostitution and human trafficking (Hughes 2000; Leidholdt 1999; McDonald and Timoshkina 2007). The predominance of concerns about the sex trafficking and victimization of women often leaves little space for sex workers to express their own concerns. However, since at least the early 1980s, sex workers in Western Europe (Brussa 1998), North America (Bell 1987; Delacoste and Alexander 1987; Leigh 2004; Jenness 1993), and throughout Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa (Kempadoo 1998) have

been organizing and expressing demands for their human rights, for social and economic justice, and effectively producing a theoretical alternative to feminist perspectives seeking to abolish prostitution as sexual slavery.

The dominant narrative of human trafficking, described in detail in the following chapter, emerging from state and international actors that conceptualize trafficking as crime or violence do not take into account this alternative framework, nor knowledge of sex work or trafficking developed through sex worker-led organizations or community-based research (for example, see Empower Foundation 2012). Mainstream feminist anti-trafficking activism shows similar elisions (see Bernstein 2010). The voices of sex workers from Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia were wholly absent within government discourse explored in this study and are largely absent from the academic literature as well.

The reason for such a lacuna is not for a lack of sex worker voices; sex worker-led organizations have existed throughout Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia since the late-1990s, for instance HOPS and Star-Star in Macedonia, Maiz in Austria, and Lega Life in Ukraine. A number of new sex worker organizations in these regions appeared during the 2000s and later (such as Silver Rose in Russia) as the role sex workers play in addressing the HIV epidemic became understood and supported by donor organizations such as the WHO, UNDP, Open Society Foundations, and The Global Fund, among others. While there are many excellent examples of community-academic collaborations (see Decker et al. 2015; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Kerrigan et al. 2015), sex workers' perspectives are not centred within the academic literature on human trafficking

from post-socialist Europe nor in official discussions on post-socialist trafficking in Canada.

Included below is an overview of some of the recent research produced by sex worker organizations in post-socialist Europe and Eurasia to highlight the perspectives of sex workers in these regions and to present an alternative to dominant theorizations and perspectives on sex trafficking given in government discourse in Canada. The global sex worker movement expresses concerns relating to the daily struggles of sex workers to access their human, health, and labour rights (NSWP 2013). Today, sex worker organizations and networks in post-socialist Europe and Eurasia are well-developed and connected to a global community of activists, carry-out their own research, and develop programming that responds to the needs of their specific communities. Despite this, the voices of sex workers from Central and Eastern European countries and Eurasia are missing from mainstream feminist and international dialogues on trafficking even though many excellent resources are available on the Internet and in English.

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) is a sex-worker led organization that links together a number of regional networks, including SWAN (Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network of Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia). SWAN is comprised of twenty-eight organizations from eighteen countries in the region and has undertaken two comprehensive research projects into police violence against sex workers (2009, 2015) and has produced advocacy documents to assist sex worker organizations to participate in the CEDAW Universal Periodic Review, which includes submissions from five organizations in the region: Republics of Kyrgyzstan (Tais Plus)



and Tajikistan (Etibor – Dignity), Bosnia and Herzegovina (PROI), Hungary (SZEXE), and HOPS (Macedonia).

The literature shows that sex workers in these areas experience rampant discrimination and systemic human rights violations, and police violence has been identified as the central concern for sex workers in this region (SWAN 2013). In 2007, SWAN member organizations voted that “police crackdowns and violence were the most pressing issues facing sex workers in the region” (Crago, Rakhmentova, and Shields 2010, 3), which they hold to be related to state policies that facilitate and encourage violence and intolerance against sex workers (Ibid.). SWAN (2013, 2015) and Crago et al.’s research engaged with sex workers in many countries, including Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Kazakhstan, and Russia.

Sex workers’ centering of state violence (SWAN 2015) challenges the Western anti-trafficking movement’s focus on demand and on law enforcement responses to trafficking; sex workers were not naming human trafficking as a central matter in their lives, but rather systemic human rights violations often perpetrated by the state. Such eliding of state violence is, perhaps not surprisingly, also evident in the government discourse in Canada. The above research also explores the intersections between state and non-state violence, whereby sex workers are targets of abuse and extortion by law enforcement yet there is no meaningful protection for them when they are victims of violence; thus, state and non-state violence are mutually reinforcing (SWAN 2015). Experiences of police extortion, violence, and neglect of sex workers’ victimization challenge the focus in the feminist literature on client violence, demand, or trafficking,

and show sex workers' experiences of violence to be complex and structured by many intersecting factors and cannot be fundamentally reduced to violence in commercial sex.

Sex workers' understanding of human trafficking also complicates dominant understandings. In its shadow report to the CEDAW Committee, Tais Plus reported that, in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, police used trafficking as a justification for their raids on sex workers (SWAN 2013). The organization reported that during raids, "police catch and detain sex workers themselves, not traffickers. At the same time, in case if sex workers are complain to real cases of traffic, police is not able to provide them needed support [*sic*]" (Ibid., 31). SZEXE's report linked human trafficking in Hungary to discrimination and police repression, which they believed contributed to a climate of abuse that facilitated forms of violence, including trafficking (SWAN 2013). A similar understanding was expressed by PROI in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who reported that "illegality [of sex workers] and lack of equal access to law and police protection" as factors which created an environment where sex workers are at risk of trafficking (Ibid., 66).

The concerns sex workers are expressing challenge the dominant narrative of human trafficking in government discourse and in much feminist literature outside of the transnational paradigm. One of the most significant insights that emerge from sex workers' experiences is the emphasis in mainstream feminist anti-trafficking activism on individual actors, such as traffickers or clients, overlooks the violence perpetrated by the state during policing of prostitution and trafficking. An appreciation of the theoretical distance that often exists between sex workers' perspectives and feminist theorizations has informed my decision to locate my project within the transnational feminist paradigm

and to align this academic project with the theorizations emerging from women, men, and trans\* people working in the global sex sector, and to develop knowledge which supports their political projects.

## **Chapter 2: Transnationalizing Post-socialist Sex Trafficking within the Canadian Context**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will set out the major theoretical frameworks on prostitution and trafficking in women and outline the transnational feminist approach to migration and sex work. I will also describe some limitations of the transnational feminist paradigm for theorizing post-socialist difference, and will address these limitations incorporating the scholarship of Madina Tlostanova (2010) and Anne McClintock (1995) into the framework of this project. The scholarship of Tlostanova and McClintock, in addition to other transnational and post-colonial feminists, has informed the major themes drawn throughout this study: the intertwining of sexuality with imperialist impulses in contemporary discourses on sex trafficking in Canada.

As radical feminists have played a significant role in shaping dominant theorizations of prostitution and trafficking in Canada and internationally, critique of radical feminist perspectives on prostitution has been a central concern for activists and scholars challenging the understanding of prostitution as violence against women. Prabha Kotiswaran (2011) describes these two “sides” as being steadfastly pitted against one another. The data in this study suggest caution in ascribing radical feminism a significant role in policy-making decisions; even while anti-prostitution perspectives were present within government debate, it was unclear that these in fact reflect a commitment to feminist analysis.

Scholars studying the sexual politics of neoliberalism suggest that the adoption of notions emerging from radical sexual politics by the state and other conservative interests does not reflect a commitment to social transformation but a reconfiguring of social and sexual justice in terms of legitimate social and economic institutions (Bernstein 2010, 2012; Duggan 2002; Mohanty 2013). This insight suggests that the legitimate concerns from feminist scholars about women's oppression in sex work may enter into Canadian government discourse in a manner that aligns with dominant social and economic institutions and state interests.

Sexual politics are also racially coded. In his discussion of racialized neoliberalism, David Theo Goldberg (2009) explains how the interests of dominant white societies are protected through the exclusion and economic exploitation of working class and non-white groups. One of the interests in this project is to explore the intertwining of nationalism, sexuality, with the protection of the Canadian nation as a white society. Expressions of Canadian nationalism are interconnected with the politics of sex trafficking: the linking of subaltern masculinities with violence against women in the figure of the trafficker and sex purchaser, and the articulation of a Canadian masculinity embodied in the figure of the gender egalitarian national subject who protects women. In the government context I am examining, discourses on sex trafficking inform public policy decisions. Thus, it is important to identify the underlying values and ideas that inform these discourses and to consider, as van Dijk explains, how they "legitimate or reproduce relations of power and dominance" (2001, 353).

## **Theoretical Paradigms on “Sex Trafficking”**

Janie Chuang (2013) identifies what she calls a trafficking industrial complex where “trafficking” has come to mean almost anything (2013, 18). She contends that the involvement of numerous different actors in the anti-trafficking field has contributed to creating a murky and confusing terrain, both practically and theoretically. Despite the proliferation of academic research on human trafficking, the assessment by scholars in the field is that much of it amounts to reformulations of existing ideas rather than the creation of new insights (Kempadoo 2012). Even for those familiar with debates in the field, it is a daunting task to wade into such a large body of literature.

Kamala Kempadoo (2001) identifies three main paradigms, the criminal justice, abolitionist, and transnational feminist paradigms. Some writers distinguish between the abolitionist and prohibitionist perspectives in order to differentiate between the movement to abolish slavery and a problematic linking of sex work to sexual slavery (van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love 2013). The criminal justice paradigm emerged with the redefining of human trafficking as transnational organized crime in the 2000 U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the concomitant focus on immigration and border security (Gallagher 2001). The criminal justice approach has informed international, regional, and national measures against human trafficking, in particular the U.S. TVPA, which links prostitution with trafficking and has made “combatting” prostitution central to anti-trafficking efforts (Kempadoo 2012). Canada, as well, has followed this approach through criminalizing the purchase of sex in order to prevent human trafficking and violence against women (Canada 2014).

The contemporary abolitionist paradigm builds on earlier feminist concerns about human trafficking and women's role in post-Vietnam War development in Southeast-Asia (Kempadoo 2012; see Brussa 1991; Lim 1998; Truong 1990); however primarily Western feminists inserted these concerns into a framework of sexual slavery which they took as central to conceptualizing human trafficking (Ibid.; see Barry 1979; Barry, Bunch, and Castley 1984). Despite alternative understandings being available, radical feminist activism at the U.N. level successfully framed trafficking as violence against women supplanting earlier, alternative approaches (Ditmore 2012; Suchland 2015). Elizabeth Bernstein (2010) further suggests that, owing to the variety of actors involved in anti-trafficking activism, there has been the more recent emergence of carceral feminism, which is the commitment to carceral<sup>29</sup> approaches to social and gender justice in the mainstream anti-trafficking movement and representing an intertwining of the criminal justice and abolitionist paradigms (see Kempadoo 2012).

The transnational feminist paradigm traces its history to Third World feminists' activism for sex worker rights in the global South (Kempadoo 2001) and encourages the de-linking of sex work and trafficking, the recognition of sex work as a form of labour, and the foregrounding of migrant women's and sex workers' experiences in theorizations of trafficking. Importantly, as Kempadoo (2012) explains, within this paradigm there is also a "methodology for constructing alternate discourses on sexuality, prostitution, and

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<sup>29</sup> Bernstein (2010) describes carceral feminism as the commitment by mainstream, feminist anti-trafficking activism to what she calls carceral politics and discourses of criminalization. While I do not discuss carceral feminism directly in this study, the approach of prominent anti-trafficking activists identified herein – such as MP Joy Smith – reflect trends identified by Bernstein.

trafficking” (p. xx) that relies on participatory approaches to knowledge production that involves partnership with those who are the focus of research.<sup>30</sup>

Transnational feminist scholars centre migrant’s and sex workers’ agency in theorizations of migration and human trafficking, observing that the definition of “victim” carries with it objectifying dimensions that deny sex workers’ subjectivity (Kempadoo 2005). Centering agency does not mean denying the significance of structural factors, but ‘to consider migrants’ desires and subjective understandings to be a crucial dimension of conceptualizing migration experiences’ (Agustín 2007, 41). The transnational approach takes seriously both structure and agency, giving them equal consideration. This is a rather different approach than liberal feminist understandings that privilege decontextualized notions of choice that obscure the importance of structural factors or within radical feminist understandings that rely heavily on structural explanations while denying individual agency (Jaggar 1997).

The manner in which notions of choice and agency have been formulated within dominant feminist perspectives on sex work has significant limitations. Alison Jaggar (1997) writes critically of what she sees as a “reductionist and inadequate” theoretical dualism within Western theorizing on prostitution, where liberal approaches see sex workers as sexual rebels or empowered workers while radical feminist approaches see them as helpless victims. Since the time of Jaggar’s writing, arguably owing to the influence of transnational feminist perspectives as well as sex workers’ activism,

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<sup>30</sup> Kamala Kempadoo, “Abolitionism, Criminal Justice, and Transnational Feminism: Twenty-first-century Perspectives on Human Trafficking,” in *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*, 2nd ed., ed. Kamala Kempadoo with Jyoti Sanghera and Bandana Pattanaik (Boulder CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), xx.



discourses on sex worker rights have become more nuanced and recognize the specificity of class, race, and migration status in shaping experiences of sex work.

Western discourses on sex worker rights, however, also have limitations. The emphasis on sex worker as an identity excludes the experiences of sex workers who do not see themselves as workers, those who do not want to adopt this identity, and those for whom sex work is not experienced as a choice. Scholarship from the transnational context challenges dominant Western conceptualization of sex work as it highlights the complexity and ambiguity of relationships that combine sexuality, intimacy, and economics (Cabezas 2009). The reliance on notions of choice, consent, and dualistic notions of work place limits on which experiences of sex work can be framed within discourses on sex worker rights. As Amalia L. Cabezas observes, “in situations where sexual commerce is unclear or where full commodification does not take place, the sex-worker discourse proves futile in shaping identities that clamour and organize for rights” (2009, 21).

The transnational paradigm exists in considerable tension with the other paradigms identified above as well as what is referred to as the “mainstream trafficking discourse,” herein called the “dominant narrative” on human trafficking. Jyoti Sanghera (2005) identifies a number of assumptions that form the basis of the mainstream discourse, including: most trafficking is for prostitution (“sex trafficking”); most women in sex work have been forced; organized criminals are responsible for human trafficking; police raids and rescues are appropriate and unproblematic responses to situations of human trafficking; and trafficking is facilitated by a lack of border or migration controls. A shift has occurred within the dominant narrative involving the increasing use of the

language of “slavery” to describe conditions of forced labour (Chuang 2013), such that trafficking – particularly sex trafficking – becomes constructed as a form of slavery rather than a wage-labour relationship (cf. Maynard 2015).

Chuang (2015) argues that since 2010 there has been a reframing of human trafficking as “modern-day slavery,” a narrative with wide popular appeal that conceals deep contradictions between concerns over exploitation and economic systems that produce wealth for some at the expense of many (Chuang 2015). The central problem of the dominant narrative and its newer articulations is their focus on the criminalization of individual actors (e.g. traffickers, sex workers, migrants) while leaving unquestioned the practices of neoliberal capitalism that produce imbalances of wealth and opportunity (Kempadoo 2015).

Kempadoo (1998) explains that there was a tendency during the 1990s to locate the struggles around sex worker rights in the Western context, thereby eliding the perspectives and activism of those in the Third World. That approach risks locating notions about sex worker rights within genealogies of Western feminist thought concerned with choice, consent, and sexual autonomy. However, the global sex worker rights movement is deeply connected to the politics of the global South, to concerns about globalization, women’s labour, and neoliberal economic policies (Jagori 2005).

Prabha Kotiswaran (2011), in her articulation of a postcolonial materialist feminist theory of sex work, suggests that feminist theorists in the Western context have failed to recognize the tradition of Marxist feminism in Third World contexts such as India and the influence of Left political culture on sex worker advocacy. Writing of her interviews with sex worker activists from DMSC, a sex worker organization in India that

currently represents 65,000 sex workers,<sup>31</sup> Kotiswaran says “it is clear that their mobilizational repertoire is shaped by the culture of workers’ protest movements in Kolkata” (2011, 11). The transnational paradigm, having a historical connection to struggles for women’s labour rights in multiple labour sectors, best captures the perspectives of the global sex worker movement today. Thus, this paradigm remains central to my project, and is of critical importance in theorizing sex work as it offers a critique and alternative to Western feminist theorizations.

Beginning in the 2000s, post-socialist feminist scholars began expressing concerns that post-socialist Europe was being neglected in global discussions about women’s rights (Suchland 2011; see Cerwonka 2008; Corcoran-Nantes 2005; Forrester, Zaborowska, and Gapova 2004; Roman 2006). For Denise Roman (2006), transnational feminism has origins in post-colonialism and critiques of Eurocentrism that speak most directly to Western Europe. Further, the critique of Eurocentrism exists in tension with post-communist discourses of “return to Europe” and away from Soviet political and Russian cultural dominance (Roman 2006, 6).

Suchland expresses the need for a rethinking of transnational feminism that can account for the specificity of the post-socialist context and move beyond the “three worlds metageography” (2011, 838). Suchland proposes engaging with Eurasia as a method to reorient transnational feminist thinking by incorporating post-socialist difference and fostering greater discussion about forms of alterity, thereby destabilizing rigid distinctions between East and West. Suchland writes that “rather than categorizing the former Second World as just a derivative of the postcolonial or of neoliberalism, a

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<sup>31</sup> Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, homepage, <http://durbar.org/index.aspx> (accessed December 2, 2015).

territorial understanding of Eurasia emphasizes the point that post-socialism is a unique place and experience ... Eurasia emerges as a new epistemological framework that can stimulate critical questions and approaches for transnational feminist thinking” (2011, 856).

Continuing the work of Suchland (2011), Redi Koobak and Raili Marling (2014) similarly describe how the specificity of the post-socialist condition has largely not been addressed within transnational feminist studies and argue that there is a need to develop new analytical approaches that can grapple with the characteristic positioning of the post-socialist as “lagging behind” the West within feminist studies broadly (2014, 332). Koobak and Marling propose applying the decolonial framework of Madina Tlostanova (2010) as a method to achieve a more inclusive transnational feminist studies.

Following the approach proposed by Koobak and Marling, this dissertation draws upon the decolonial framework articulated by Madina Tlostanova (2010). Tlostanova’s work engages with the Russian colonization of Eurasia, however her framework has broader applications and can be used to describe various forms of colonial relations. The varied genealogy of Tlostanova’s decolonial thought, drawing on Third World feminist and postcolonial thought, Latin-American Indigenous scholars, and colonial/imperial narratives of Eurasia, is an example of cross-border dialogues or “geopolitical translations”<sup>32</sup> that are central to transnational feminist approaches to theory (Mohanty 2013, 975).

Tlostanova’s approach is useful for this study, which takes up the task of writing about the post-socialist from within the West, for two reasons. First, drawing on colonial

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<sup>32</sup> I particularly enjoyed Mohanty’s manner of describing this movement of theory of the as “trafficking in feminist thought” (Mohanty 2013, 978).

experiences of Eurasia engages different problems and concepts than the dialogue between North and South in postcolonial theories (Tlostanova 2010). For instance, colonial gender understandings in the Russian colonization of Eurasia disrupt the “Western myth of the White woman as innocent, submissive, and sexual passive” present in the white slave narrative by relating them to Islamic understandings of feminine piety<sup>33</sup> (Tlostanova 2010, 79-80). This challenges the dominant Western construction of white women as victims (see Ware 1992). Second, Tlostanova invites a comparison between Soviet modernity and Western modernity, showing that they are grounded in the same logic of modernity and relationships of coloniality; just as the Russian/Soviet empire has been colonized by Western modernity, Russian and Soviet forms of modernity colonized the Caucasus and Central Asia and display similar imperialistic tendencies.

My analysis is also informed by the work of transnational and postcolonial scholars, specifically Anne McClintock (1995), Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2006, 2013), Sherene Razack (1998, 2004), and Sunera Thobani (2007), as well as by post-industrial feminist scholar Elizabeth Bernstein (2010, 2012, 2014). Tlostanova draws on the work of McClintock (1995), particularly her concepts of the family of man and panoptical time, the influences of which have been woven throughout this study. The concept of panoptical time refers to “the image of global history being consumed – at a glance – in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility” (1995, 37), and is a manner of inserting global history into a narrative of progress. McClintock’s work shares numerous concerns and interests with transnational and postcolonial scholarship, such as critiques of modernity and modern patterns of thinking (e.g. classification of groups of people and

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<sup>33</sup> During Russian colonization of Eurasia, Russian women were seen as caricatures of aggressive, promiscuous female sexuality that was juxtaposed against the Islamic moral value of piety, particularly as it applied to women’s sexuality (see Tlostanova 2010, 81-82).

things), grand narratives, the colonization of space by time, as well as projects central to modernity itself (Eurocentrism, emancipation, progress, liberation, linear history).

Tlostanova's critique of the engrained pattern of juxtaposing modernity with tradition points to the symbolic significance of the post-socialist context in relation to Western modernity. Similar to the manner in which Maria Todorova (1997) or Larry Wolff (1994) describe the "invention" or "imagining" of Eastern Europe, the idea and meaning of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia exists within a social imaginary whose elements find expression in human trafficking narratives in the Canadian context. There are persistent understandings about post-socialist countries in contemporary Western world that continue to be reproduced. Emanuel Crudu and Maria Emerenko (2012), writing on the position of Central and Eastern European countries in post-enlargement European Union, describe the continued reinvention of Central and Eastern Europe as underdeveloped and dysfunctional in relation to core Europe and that matters such as illegal migration and organized crime have "supplied additional fuel to the existing constellation of narratives of alterity-making" (2012, 10). I propose that similar patterns can be observed in Canadian government discourse, where human trafficking came to be conceptualized as a problem of organized crime, poverty, unprogressive gender values, and dysfunction in post-socialist societies.

### **Tracing the Development of a Transnational Theoretical Approach**

A number of difficult and seemingly insurmountable divisions exist surrounding feminist theorizing of sex work and human trafficking. The global sex worker movement cautions against the conflation of sex work with human trafficking, and expresses

concerns that prostitution has been collapsed with trafficking in international agreements, which has further been conflated with the concept of demand for commercial sexual services in Swedish and American anti-trafficking policies (NSWP 2011). The global movement problematizes the language “sex trafficking” as it generates conceptual confusion between sex work and human trafficking.

My choice to use the language of “sex trafficking” intentionally highlights the idea of sex trafficking as a category of analysis that has a genealogical connection to white slavery (Doezema 2000) and that has been produced through radical feminist activism, particularly within the United Nations system (Ditmore 2005, 2012; Suchland 2015). “Sex trafficking” contains specific normative understandings, institutional organization (vis-à-vis the economy, marriage, law), and produces identities, subjectivities, as well as particular forms of knowledge (see Scott 1986) on gender as a category of analysis). Rather than representing an empirical reality, the notion of “sex trafficking” itself has been produced through specific histories and theoretical perspectives that continue to reproduce established patterns of understanding.

Kotiswaran’s manner of characterizing the fundamental differences between opposing perspectives on sex work and human trafficking – the general caricature sees prohibitionists and radical feminist activists on one “side” and sex worker advocates, Third World and woman of colour feminists on the other – is the difference between conceptualizing exploitation as a political condition of oppression as opposed to an economic condition (Kotiswaran 2011, 25). Kotiswaran explains that fundamental to the radical feminist opposition to sex work is the market-mediated objectification of women’s bodies, often referred to as “commodification” of bodies, which from this

perspective is the harm of prostitution. She also explains that sex work advocates tend to de-exceptionalize sex work, seeing it as an income-generating activity (see Kempadoo 1998), troubling the firm boundary between intimacy and economics apparent in the radical feminist perspective (see Bernstein 2007; Cabezas 2009; Zelizer 2005), and emphasizing sex worker agency.

This dissertation follows this latter understanding, which links to Thanh-Dam Truong's (1990) pioneering study on sex work and tourism in Southeast Asia. Truong develops an analysis based in the political economy of women's labour and sexuality, and empiricizes the productive value of sex workers' sexual labour to capital accumulation thereby bridging sexuality and economy. Truong explains that there is a category of labour resulting from the use of the sexual elements of the body<sup>34</sup> and the productive value of this labour is often "concealed by cognitive and institutional structures governing sexuality" (1990, 197). Given the tensions between sexuality and economy that exist within liberal and radical theorizations of sex work and the discomfort of many materialist feminists with the commodification of sexual labour (Kotiswaran 2011), Truong's insights remain critical as sexual labour continues to be treated as exceptional from other forms of labour.<sup>35</sup>

Building on the understanding of sex work as legitimate, but often a loosely organized and informal form of labour, I utilize the language "sex sector" rather than "sex industry," drawing on Lin Lean Lim's (1998) study of prostitution in Southeast Asia. Lim

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<sup>34</sup> Thanh-Dam Truong, *Sex, Money and Morality: Prostitution and Tourism in Southeast Asia* (London UK: Zed Books, 1990), 91.

<sup>35</sup> While Truong builds an empirical argument for the productive value of sexual labour and the need for de-exceptionalizing sexual labour in prostitution, she appears to hold concerns similar to other materialist feminists. She writes that "for the market to avail itself of sexual choices, sex as a source of life (emotions, vitality) of some people must be first appropriated ... to stop judging prostitution is one thing, but to cease imposing ethical boundaries on the use of sexual labour is quite another" (1990, 202).



argues for the recognition of sex work as a legitimate economic sector owing to its enormous contributions to local economies and the need for labour protections for workers. Lim highlights “a commercial sex sector that is integrated into the economic, political, and social life” of Southeast Asian countries (1998, 1); income from prostitution provides both direct and indirect employment, is a mechanism for income redistribution vis-à-vis remittances, is a coping mechanism for addressing poverty and social welfare, and is a source of foreign exchange earnings. The language “sex industry” risks connoting a massive, highly industrialized and regulated sex sector where women are forcibly sexually exploited (see, for example, Jeffreys 2009). While it is reasonable to assume that the tourism and entertainment industries in certain regions are sophisticated, highly organized, and firmly rooted within the legitimate economy, this terminology obfuscates the many informal arrangements that are found within a largely criminalized labour sector (see Bruckert and Law 2013) and risks conveying anti-prostitution connotations.

Kotiswaran (2011) suggests that many feminists occupy a middle ground between the radical feminist and sex work positions, which reflects the increasing understanding among feminists of the violence imposed on sex workers under regimes to abolish prostitution but a resistance to “supporting” the sex sector more broadly (Ibid.). While early examples of literature from the Western context portray sex workers as empowered workers and sexual rebels (see Aline 1987; Bell 1995; St. James 1987), more recent literature from the global movement also recognizes the violence and oppression many sex workers experience (see Crago et al. 2010; J.J. 2013; Slamah et al. 2010; van Beelen

and Rakhmetova 2010), thus complicating the common mischaracterization of the sex workers' demands as reflective only of liberal ideas surrounding choice.<sup>36</sup>

While battles play out in online feminist forums between sex worker advocates and radical feminists,<sup>37</sup> debates in the Canadian Parliament do not suggest the ascendancy of radical feminist perspectives on prostitution despite the strength of some individual voices espousing anti-prostitution or prohibitionist perspectives that draw on some elements from radical feminism. The presence of such discourses suggests that some parliamentarians have adopted the middle ground position described by Kotiswaran. While radical feminism has influenced how prostitution and human trafficking are understood in Canada and internationally, this study is cautious about ascribing explanatory or policy-making power to radical feminist theorizing within the governmental context, as doing so may overlook nuances within the debates themselves that may point to larger issues surrounding the use of feminist precepts by the neoliberal state.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty observes that the way in which neoliberal projects have appropriated feminism and concerns about gender justice are rhetorical and proceed without a commitment to social justice or social transformation (2013, 972). Elizabeth Bernstein (2014) highlights a related set of concerns in her discussion of the sexual politics of neoliberalism, where “economic and cultural agendas which reimagine ‘women’s human rights’ in terms of women’s insertion into (legitimate) market economies, and their protection by state apparatuses of criminal justice” (2014, 347).

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<sup>36</sup> Victor Malarek, in his testimony during the sex trafficking study, displayed this common conceptual confusion when he referred to sex worker advocacy as the pro-sex work lobby that supports pimps and exploiters. This perception mischaracterizes the demands of the global sex worker movement.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example: <http://rabble.ca/babble/rabble-reactions/we-demand-rabbleca-end-your-association-meghan-murphy-blogger>

Together, these scholars suggest that neoliberalism has facilitated a move away from structural analysis of power relations, concerns about redistribution, and economic justice – central to a critical feminist analysis – to the linking of women’s rights to carceral modes of social justice, including securitized borders (see Bernstein 2010, 2014).

Rather than using the label of radical feminism to describe anti-prostitution understandings, this study utilizes the violence against women (VAW) paradigm to describe prohibitionist, anti-trafficking discourses in the Canadian governmental context as this is the language used in international law and policy-making. The United Nations defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (U.N. General Assembly 1993, Article 1). The VAW paradigm was developed through radical feminist activism at the United Nations and, as radical feminists saw prostitution as violence, sex trafficking became incorporated into the VAW agenda (Suchland 2015).

Janet Halley et al. (2006) suggest that feminism in its institutional governance form may work toward decidedly non-feminist ends. The data in this study show that discourses on violence against women are interwoven with those of nationalism and exclusion of immigrants. Although the VAW paradigm has been informed by radical feminism, within this dissertation I avoid collapsing all anti-prostitution and prohibitionist discourses with radical feminism unless I am able to determine that this is the speaker’s theoretical orientation.

## Whiteness and Neoliberal Capitalism

There has been little discussion of whiteness in contemporary discourses on human trafficking. This study explores the relevance of whiteness in discourses on human trafficking, building upon scholarship on the historical white slave narrative and contemporary concerns over trafficking in women (See: Doezema 2010). “Whiteness” here refers to specific expressions of whiteness within neoliberal globalization. Sedef Arat-Koç (2014) explains that whiteness increasingly references the status as “insider” within capitalist modernity while poorer and working classes that are not constructed as neoliberal bourgeois subjects are seen to contain attributes both antithetical and threatening to the middle class. Similar to the historical white slave, post-socialist exotic dancers were positioned in an ambiguous manner in Canadian government discourse. Understood either as undesirable immigrants or victims of sex trafficking, post-socialist exotic dancers were understood to be outside of normative structures of the economy and society.

In his discussion of racial neoliberalism, David Theo Goldberg (2009) explains that the neoliberal state, primarily concerned with securing conditions to facilitate accumulation, has an interest in excluding those who threaten the fiscal well-being or social security of the nation.<sup>38</sup> He writes, “those considered to have little or no standing, the welfare of whom is calculated to cost too much, economically or politically” are problematized as threats and contaminants (2009, 332). The whiteness of post-socialist women conditioned concerns about their sexual violation and enhanced their position as legitimate victims, yet the policy responses designed to address their victimization

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<sup>38</sup> David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 335-336.

justified the exclusion of groups not seen as insiders of global capitalism as understood by Arat-Koç. Within neoliberalism, exclusions carry deep racial connotations and privilege those who embody or emulate whiteness (Goldberg 2009) just as whiteness is increasingly associated with middle class status (Arat-Koç 2014). Exclusions, then, protect the whiteness of the neoliberal state through rejecting non-bourgeois, racialized and, as Goldberg writes, “unruly” groups of people (2009, 334).

To illustrate, the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation (Bill C-57) was proposed ostensibly to prevent migrant workers, particularly exotic dancers, from being trafficked or otherwise exploited. The following example is taken from evidence given to the House of Commons Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that studied the legislation in 2008:

Take the example of ... a young American who wants to come to Canada to work as an unskilled worker in the construction industry. This is someone who speaks mainly English ... It is someone who has worked in a fairly highly developed labour market, who knows about labour standards, who probably has sufficient resources to go back home without someone else's support and who could create a support network here in Canada. When this young American's application is assessed, even if there is information to suggest that there is a risk of the worker being exploited ... the person's individual characteristics indicate that he has the resources he needs to make his way (Les Linklater, Director General, Immigration Branch. Canada 2008, 5).

For instance, Lady X from Hungary goes to a job in Canada with what many of us in this room and most Canadians would consider an unscrupulous employer - a massage parlour owner. She has a job contract that says she's going to be a cleaner, a waitress, or a registered massage therapist, but that's not the case. She knows exactly what type of work she's going to be doing; she's going to be in the sex trade and she's going to be doing things that are illegal in this country (Dave Batters, CPC MP. Canada 2008, 7).

Here, American masculinity is associated with trustworthiness and legitimacy (i.e. speaks English, has resources, knows labour standards), while post-socialist femininity is linked with criminality in the form of immigration fraud and prostitution.

By targeting the characteristics of individual workers, those who fall outside of normative social and economic structures are positioned as problems and set out for exclusion. While the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation was supported by appeals to protect vulnerable groups from harm –particularly foreign exotic dancers – it nevertheless proposed the exclusion of potential migrants through understandings associated with sexuality, class, and nation. The choice of two individuals in working class jobs whom the audience will likely assume are white people diffuses accusations about race- and class-based exclusions, yet the effect of this policy approach would be the rejection of groups who are often non-white and non-middle class who threaten established forms of white power and privilege.

The post-socialist female subject is ambiguously situated on the boundaries of gender and nation as a potential member of white societies yet also as a potential threat because of her connection to post-socialist criminality and unprogressiveness that is associated with the non-Western world more generally. Her whiteness enables her to be easily cast as a “sex slave” and legitimate victim, but it legitimated policy responses that disproportionately target underground economies, informal labour sectors, and migration channels where poorer and non-white bodies are more likely to be found.

## **Sexualized Nationalism Canadian-Style: The Courageous and Compassionate National Subject and the Whiteness of the Nation**

In Mr. Harper's address is a very different sort of nationalism: a nationalism of moral purpose. Canada exists to do good, for its own people and for the world. It is defined by its beliefs and measured by its acts, not by the virtues of its people, real or imagined. Indeed, it makes no claim to uniqueness in this regard, but rather upholds principles that are timeless and universal.<sup>39</sup>

In his 2006 article on former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's address during a visit to Afghanistan,<sup>40</sup> Andrew Coyne identified a form of Canadian nationalism he referred to as a nationalism of moral purpose, which is the duty of Canada to do good in the world. In his speech, Prime Minister Harper expressed his ambition for Canada to "[provide] leadership on global issues, [step] up to the plate, [do] good when required."<sup>41</sup> While Canada's national mythology rests heavily on global peacekeeping as an expression of Canadian "goodness" (Razack 2004), what is detectable in Harper's speech is a supercharged Canadian nationalism that seeks to do good by asserting ethical and moral superiority.

Stephen Harper served as Prime Minister during the time when the sex trafficking study was carried out, when debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation took place, as well as when the motion to condemn international sex trafficking was proposed. In the form of Canadian nationalism that emerged during Stephen Harper's leadership, the majority Conservative government drew on traditional

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Coyne, "Harper's Mission Statement," *National Post*, March 15, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Canada had a military presence in Afghanistan from 2001, shortly after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, until 2014. See: Government of Canada, "The Canadian Armed Forces Legacy in Afghanistan," National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/operations-abroad-past/cafla.page> (accessed August 15, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Coyne, "Harper's Mission Statement," *National Post*, March 15, 2006.

elements of Canadian mythology, such as the “true North strong and free” and linked them to aggressive assertions of northern sovereignty and bolstered military power.<sup>42</sup> John Ibbitson commented that Conservative advertisements liken Canadian “greatness” to a “courageous warrior and a compassionate neighbour” and suggests that Harper’s nationalism is rooted in the “idea of the North.”<sup>43</sup> This form of nationalism emphasizes loyalty, duty, and contains elements of force and aggressiveness. It is detectable in MP Joy Smith’s final comments during the debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking, when she expressed that the motion is about “the protection of innocent victims ... [The victims] need to be shown that we as Canadians stand for the true north strong and free.”<sup>44</sup>

A theme that is prevalent throughout this study is that of Canadian civilizational superiority of the state and by extension the national subject. This is the notion that Canada and Canadian values are progressive, enlightened, and superior. Continuities can be seen between Coyne’s variation of nationalism and earlier forms described by Sherene Razack (2004). According to Razack, a Canadian knows “herself or himself as someone who comes from the nicest place on earth, as someone from a peacekeeping nation, and as a modest, self-deprecating individual who is able to gently teach Third World Others about civility” (Razack 2004, 9). Razack explains this feeling, this sentiment, is part of a contemporary expression of empire. Drawing on the work of Edward Said, Razack discusses how empire is experienced as a structure of feeling and the ways we (Western,

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<sup>42</sup> Martin Lawrence, “Can Harper Make Canadians Feel Good?,” *The Globe and Mail*, July 15, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> John Ibbitson, “Tory Strategy Seeks to Stoke Canadians’ True Patriot Love,” *The Globe and Mail*, April 19, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (22 February 2007), p. 7239 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).



modern subjects) hold a powerful belief in our (national or individual) abilities to lead, to stand for freedom, order, and justice.

Razack's insights are significant for linking feelings and sentiments to expressions of political dominance, which become evident in the debates on sex trafficking where parliamentarians speak at length about the strength and leadership abilities of the Canadian state in the fight against human trafficking. While it is to be expected during oral speeches that parliamentarians will engage in rhetorical exaggeration, the form it takes incorporates nationalistic values associated with Canadianess:

We in Canada, as a free and democratic nation, have a duty to vigorously oppose this vile form of enslavement wherever it exists. To do anything less would be an abrogation of our responsibilities as caring and just human beings (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5878).

I believe it is only right that we should be able to prevent a human being from entering into a situation that would result in harm. It is the Canadian way to warn an individual that he or she is about to make a mistake, which could have irreversible negative effects on their future. Above all, it is a Canadian tradition to stand up and be accountable among our friends and help them in a fight against exploitation (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 5 June 2007, 10147).

Here, Canadianess is associated with being caring, just, knowing the right thing to do, and having a duty to “stand up” to protect our friends. Razack describes this attitude of superiority as a New World Order mythology that is connected to longer histories of colonialism and imperialism (2004, 9).

In this mythology, the West is aligned with freedom, democracy, and human rights, and the East and South as “uncivilized” terrain (Razack 2004).<sup>45</sup> This worldview is likewise a feature of Western modernity more broadly; Madina Tlostanova, drawing on the work of Enrique Dussel (1995), explains that modernity itself is a phenomenon that “includes a rational ‘concept’ of emancipation that Western modernity affirm[s] and subsume[s]” (Tlostanova 2010, 19). Thus, ideas about Canadian civilizational superiority are situated in patterns of knowledge produced through colonial histories and Western modernity more broadly.

Discourses on sex trafficking became sites to re-affirm notions of Canadian civilizational superiority that are informed by an imperial attitude about the position of Canada in contemporary world order and Canadian national values, such as responsibility, caring, and compassion (see Thobani 2007, 4). This attitude manifests as a sense of global awareness, described by Barbara Heron (2007) as an implicit comparison between Canada and other nations on a global scale. Within the parliamentary debates on human trafficking policies that took place after the Sgro scandal in 2004 and 2005, Canada was positioned as an observer to the rest of the world, a location with enlightened gender relations with the obligation to protect vulnerable women and children.

As I discussed above, post-socialist Europe is conceptualized as criminalized, corrupt, and out of step with modernity in the Canadian governmental context, understandings reflected in the academic literature describing Central and Eastern Europe and Russia as an abject space. These narratives comprise discourses of alterity-making, reinventing and recreating the post-socialist in various ways as non-Western and

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<sup>45</sup> While Sherene Razack draws upon Canadian peacekeeping activities in Kosovo and the former Yugoslavia, her analysis is centred on the relationship between global North and global South.

underdeveloped. This understanding enabled Canadian parliamentarians to place Canada and other regions of the world, including post-socialist Europe, into dialogue with one another, whereby Canada was positioned in relation to others as a liberator or saviour to the tradition-bound. The figure of Natasha, the post-socialist victim of sex trafficking embodying the qualities of the white slave, became emblematic of the problems of post-socialist Europe that undergirded Canadian claims to civilizational superiority. Sex trafficking came to be seen as a problem related to unprogressive gender values and criminality in post-socialist countries, with Canada positioned to save the particularly vulnerable post-socialist victim of trafficking (see discussion on “Natasha” in Chapter 1).

One of the registers through which Canadian civilizational superiority becomes articulated is through “good” and “bad” forms of sexuality in a form of sexualized nationalism (see Mosse 1985). In many times and places, nationalistic sentiments congeal around ideas about appropriate sexuality and modernity (Mosse 1985). In Canadian government discourse, sex trafficking was conceptualized as something threatening to Canada and Canadian national values not only in terms of external threats in the form of criminality, but also – importantly – cultural understandings that devalue women and deny women’s equality. In debate, MP Joe Comartin stated that cultural values condoning violence against women in sexual relations were one of the root causes of sex trafficking,<sup>46</sup> suggesting that patriarchal attitudes permitting violence against women emerge from outside of Canada’s borders. In this sense, protecting women continues to be an element in securing not only borders but the symbolic boundaries of the nation (see Yuval-Davis 1997).

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<sup>46</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5876 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

Drawing on insights from Don Kulick's (2005) observations of prostitution law reform discussion in Sweden, the data examined in this study support the understanding that prostitution became coded as an activity out of step with Canadian values of gender equality, one reflective of the qualities of less progressive nations and subaltern masculine subjects. In her speech during debate on the motion to condemn the international trafficking of girls and women for sexual exploitation, MP Maria Mourani remarked: Canada should reject legalizing prostitution because it only enables unequal gender relations.<sup>47</sup> "Good" forms of sexuality took form around ideas about the superiority of Canadian values and masculine enlightenment in the form of concern for women's equality. This development shares similarities with the Swedish context even though Canada does not have the same official discourse on gender parity that exists in Sweden. It is within the prostitution debate in Canada that unequal gender relations become particularly problematic.

The purchasers of sexual services were pathologized by actors such as journalist Victor Malarek (2003) and law professor Benjamin Perrin – both of whom were influential in discussions on sex trafficking in Canada – as well as MPs Maria Mourani<sup>48</sup> and Joy Smith. Smith fostered the development of "end demand" for purchased sex discourse within government debate and recast clients as sexual predators during debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking. Smith understood clients to be at the root of international sex trafficking, stating "we need to deal with the clients, the men who go after the market to rape young girls."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5875 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP).

<sup>48</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5874-75 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP).

<sup>49</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5872 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).

In his discussion on the genealogy of the client subject, Kulick (2005) locates a definitive turn toward the client as a “type” in 1996 in an influential Swedish publication about sex purchasers. Kulick explains that a study entitled *Sexuality Without A Face* further entrenched notions already circulating in the Swedish context since the 1980s that saw “clients [as] the predictable outcome of a patriarchal society” (2005, 215). It was shortly after the publication of this study that Kotiswaran (2011) identifies one of the earliest forays of radical feminist theorizing into ideas about sex markets and “demand” in Hughes’s (2000) article about the Natasha trade. The incursion of such discourses into the Canadian context connects the domestic dialogue with concerns circulating in the international sphere for nearly a decade, concerns that emerged from a state with differing discourses on gender equality and approaches to social welfare provision.<sup>50</sup>

By 2006 in Canada, the sex purchaser was being positioned by policymakers as a particular type of psychologically disturbed man. Benjamin Perrin, similar to earlier Swedish studies linking personal and social problems to the purchase of sex like Kulick (2005), later describes habitual users of sexual services as “‘deeply troubled’ men who can only relate to women in a sexualized way” (Perrin 2010, 166) illustrating the trajectory of these earlier discussions from 2006 and 2007.<sup>51</sup> What seems to be problematized here, as Kulick observes about the Swedish studies, is the separation between love and sex. Kulick highlights how discomfort with the intermingling of intimate relations and economic activity, long seen as separate and hostile worlds in the

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<sup>50</sup> Gregor Mattson (2016) links recent changes in European prostitution policy to the type of welfare state regimes that exist in different countries. In the Canadian case, discourses emerging from a state-oriented social welfare regime were imported into a market-oriented social welfare regime existing in Canada.

<sup>51</sup> Regrettably Perrin does not cite the international study from which he took this quote, although it seems plausible that it could be one of the Swedish studies detailed by Kulick (2005).

Western context (Zelizer 2005), took on explicitly political goals related to gender equality as it was translated into public policy addressing sex work.

Applying Elizabeth's Bernstein's (2010, 2012) insights on the intertwining of feminist gender politics and punitive agendas in the contemporary anti-trafficking movement to the Canadian context, this dissertation identifies the emergence of a Canadian sexualized nationalism where Canadian civilizational superiority is linked to a gender egalitarian enlightened masculinity, where the appropriate outlet for sexual expression is within the emotionally-bound couple and commercial sexual relations are seen as opposed to women's equality. This is apparent in Joy Smith's policy paper on prostitution law reform stating "the purchase of sex [is] contrary to *Canadian* values" (my emphasis) (Smith 2014, 16).

Scholars have shown that gender is deeply implicated in nationalist and imperialist projects (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1989; Enloe 1990; McClintock 1995; Nagle 1997; Whitworth 2004; Tlostanova 2010). Masculine ideals and behaviour have become incorporated into institutions such as the state (Nagle 1997) and masculinity has been central to articulations of nationalism (Ibid.) and imperialism (McClintock 1995). McClintock analogizes the masculinity of nationalism to a family tree, whereby the head of the family or patriarch protects women who are the symbolic boundaries of the nation. The form of Canadian national masculinity found in government discourse is concerned with protecting women from harm and gender egalitarianism. This is not a militarized masculinity (Whitworth 2004) nor a form of benevolent national character that sees Canadians as the nicest people on earth (Razack 2004), but a national masculinity that is

at once forceful and sensitive as demonstrated through acting aggressively to protect vulnerable women.

Elizabeth Bernstein (2012) describes how contemporary feminist anti-trafficking activists have been keen to restore an amative sexual ethic to heterosexual relationships as a method of remaking the institution of marriage in an egalitarian fashion. Bernstein links these shifts to challenges faced by the bourgeois class in neoliberalism and observes that investments in conservative sexual politics can be thought of as gendered and classed responses to the economic challenges confronting the bourgeois class and, I would add, white middle class women in particular, in neoliberal capitalism. Ostensibly, this idea mirrors socialist feminists calls for “free love.”

Feminists such as Alexandra Kollontai (1977), however, were opposed to bourgeois sexual morality of possessive romantic love and the private, isolated family unit. She put forward a sexual ethic based on “ideas of complete freedom, equality, and genuine friendship” (1977, 241) developed through communal work and struggle. Kollontai believed that women’s involvement in productive activity would weaken inequality between the sexes, and was dismissive of the type of amoristic relations contemporary anti-trafficking feminists seek to impose as a step toward egalitarian marriage. For materialist feminists, sexual connection emerges as an aspect of human relationships that develops from work done for the common good (see also Agathangelou 2004, 12). However, because of the discursive frameworks structuring notions of love and sexuality, both radical and materialist feminists have difficulty accepting the sexual labour involved in prostitution as legitimate work.

Lisa Duggan (2002) explains that the sexual politics of neoliberalism is one that “does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (2002, 179). While Duggan is writing about homonormativity and queer social movements, her observations about the shift in queer activism from calls for radical social change to mainstream political positions further highlight the shifting and contradictory sexual politics surrounding gender and sexuality in neoliberalism more broadly.

Bernstein’s discussion of the securitization of men’s sexuality in the anti-trafficking movement speaks to a conservative sexual politics where notions of women’s equality are centred while at the same time bolstering the ideological power of the patriarchal family, including the insulating the family against charges of patriarchal violence or oppression by externalizing the problem of patriarchy onto pathological men who cannot relate to women in a “normal” (i.e. non-commercial) way. It positions masculine sexuality paradoxically as an agent of progress and modernity while being surveilled and becoming a target of state intervention through criminalizing the purchase of sex.

In this study, I argue that discourses of Canadian civilizational superiority and sexualized nationalism contribute to structures and practices that produce and sustain white supremacy by producing justifications for various forms of exclusion. White supremacy does not refer singularly to exclusions based on skin colour, but to relationships whereby the “system of white wealth, power, and privilege” (Kempadoo



2015, 13) is maintained and defended.<sup>52</sup> It is about the creation of policies and practices that secure existing hierarchies and relationships of superiority and inferiority whereby the privilege of dominant groups is protected. Despite concerns about protecting women from harm, the discussion in Parliament was concerned with increasing control over who is permitted entry Canada.

While Central and Eastern European women were visible and of concern to the Canadian state because of their whiteness and the ease with which they are taken-up as legitimate victims, the narratives that they were situated in resulted in their exclusion from the Canadian nation-state for their own protection. Legislation brought forward to address the plight of Central and Eastern European women working as exotic dancers in Canada sought to eliminate women's access to the work permit and thus Canada's "complicity" in human trafficking.<sup>53</sup> To return to Goldberg's insights into racial neoliberalism, "unruly" groups are set-out for exclusion. "Unruly groups," of course include criminals, "outsiders" who are prone to deceiving the immigration system in order to gain from it (see Thobani 2007). The exclusion of particular groups maps onto broader geopolitical dynamics that point to manifestations of racism in globalized neoliberalism.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the transnational feminist approach to sex work and human trafficking and highlighted the intertwining of sexuality and nationalism in contemporary projects targeted toward sex trafficking in Canada. Foundational to

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<sup>52</sup> Kamala Kempadoo, "The Modern Day White (Wo)Man's Burden: Trends in Anti-Trafficking and Anti-Slavery Campaigns," *Journal of Human Trafficking* 1, no.1 (2015): 13.

<sup>53</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10135 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP).

Western feminist literature on prostitution and trafficking is a concern with the sexual violation of white women. As post-socialist women are positioned racially as white but embody less privileged forms of whiteness owing to their class and ethnicity, the female post-socialist subject places into relief understandings associated with white femininity – innocence, purity, and vulnerability – and how these concerns undergird fears and anxieties about prostitution. Transnational feminists have offered critique on the imperialistic treatment of non-Western women of colour, but have had less to say regarding non-Western white women. As the panic about prostitution and trafficking has developed in relation to white women specifically, there is a need to develop concepts and definitions to describe commercial sexual and economic exchanges that build upon specific geo-political locals, genders, racial identities, and subjectivities and to acknowledge potential limitations of applying existing theoretical approaches to diverse groups of women.

### **Chapter 3: Positioning the Post-socialist Sex Worker: Abjection and Transformation in the “Shadowsapes”**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of the literature on sex workers from Eastern and Central Europe and Russia, emphasizing transnational feminist writing as well that which fits broadly within the transnational paradigm yet intersects with other theoretical traditions. As noted in Chapter 2, transnational feminist scholars have paid less attention to the nuances of white, non-Western women’s positioning and experiences. There is, however, a small but growing body of recent literature that is starting to address this absence. In this literature, transnational feminists emphasize the agency of migrants and sex workers complicating the representation of the hapless “Natasha” figure by centering the specificities of the post-socialist context and women’s migration experiences (see Andrijasevic 2007, 2010; Davies 2009; Mai 2013; Siegel 2012).

Within literature from other feminist traditions, particularly radical and materialist feminism, the post-socialist sex worker often appears as a victim with an injured and violated body or as an agent constrained in bleak circumstances that render her decisions nearly meaningless (see Hughes 2000, 2004; Parvulsecu 2014; Penttinen 2008). The term “radical feminism” is frequently used by feminist scholars in Canada and transnationally to describe feminisms expressing anti-prostitution or prohibitionist perspectives (see Kotiswaran 2011; van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love 2013) as well as feminists who

consider prostitution as a form of violence and sexual exploitation (see Barry 1979; MacKinnon 1987; Raymond 2013).

Radical feminism is a complex theoretical field with many internal tensions, although it problematizes overall what is seen as ‘men’s control of women’s sexual and reproductive lives, identity, self-esteem, and self-respect’ and considers patriarchy as the primary source of women’s oppression (Tong 2009, 50). Some radical feminists consider the norms of patriarchal bourgeois sexuality as themselves repressive, seeing heterosexual sexuality as “beyond repair” and that which must “be destroyed so women can live fully” (Ibid., 66). These perspectives find expression in anti-prostitution and anti-pornography activism from feminists such as Kathleen Barry (1979, 1955) and Catherine MacKinnon (1987), both well known for their prohibitionist positions. For these radical feminists, patriarchy and heterosexual sex themselves are seen to be harmful to women, not only to women in prostitution (Tong 2009). However, as Bernstein (2012) shows, contemporary anti-trafficking activism that denounces prostitution does not also condemn marriage, but rather seeks to remake marriage as gender egalitarian, thereby enhancing married women’s power in the domestic sphere; this is a conservative rather than radical form of sexual politics. For this reason, in this study, I am cautious about applying the label “radical feminism” based solely on expressions of anti-prostitution or prohibitionist perspectives.

The organization of the literature herein reflects major tensions in theorizations of prostitution within feminism. Theorizations of prostitution and trafficking characterized by structural explanations sit in tension with approaches that seek to centre the subjectivity of the sex worker and reposition her in theory in terms of agency and

inclusion. The first two sections of this chapter attend to the former concern and emphasize structural factors. I will discuss state practices that condition the economic exploitation of post-socialist sex workers, followed by a critical reading of abjection – a concept used with some frequency to represent conditions for this group of women and post-socialism itself. The next two sections focus on the latter concern. In these sections I draw on insights from migration studies and emphasize post-socialist sex workers’ agency and subjectivity, which I contend represents a fruitful approach to developing novel theorizations of migration and sex work that take into account both structure and agency.

The final section of this chapter will explore state interests in controlling migration as well as expressions of nationalism and sexuality within narratives on sex trafficking. Discussions of ethnicization, racialization, and nationalism in discourses on prostitution and human trafficking remain under-theorized in the literature generally, and indeed there is little addressing the Canadian context. There is a body of theoretical work within the transnational paradigm exploring the intersection of human trafficking policies and state efforts to curtail irregular migration (Andrijasevic 2007, 2010; Chaung 2010; Gallagher 2001; Kapur 2003, 2005). At the same time, fewer studies have investigated how concerns related to women’s rights and sexuality become interwoven with the politics of human trafficking. To end this review, I explore some of this literature, setting the context for the Chapter 4 that presents an analysis of the post-socialist victim of trafficking and the Canadian “white night” in Victor Malarek’s *The Natashas*.

## **State Practices, Exploitation, and Exclusion of Post-socialist Sex Workers**

The scholarship in this section illustrates how state politics and practices structure the material and symbolic spaces of the global sex sector, for example policies and practices surrounding access to citizenship, labour markets, as well as criminalization of prostitution. Scholars focusing on these questions consider the way state practices give shape to sexual economies and how the sexual labour of post-socialist women in sex work is organized. The literature emphasizes structural factors that give rise to conditions of violence and economic exploitation that post-socialist migrant sex workers are located within.

Scholars foreground different aspects of post-socialist sex workers' experiences, describing how post-socialist sex workers are victims of male violence (Hughes 2000, 2004; Parvulescu 2014), the economic and cultural processes of globalization (Agathangelou 2003; Penttinen 2008), or of poverty and economic transition (Kligman and Limoncelli 2005; True 2003). Gail Kligman and Stephanie Limoncelli (2005) provide an overview of structural factors, citing restructuring of labour markets, gendered social inequality, increased ease of migration, and opportunities for new types of commerce as main reasons for post-socialist women's involvement in sex work. The literature's primary explanation for post-socialist women's involvement in migration for sex work is the political economic context that precipitated this wave of women's involvement in the sex sector: the collapse of socialism and transition to a market economy in the early 1990s and the process of European enlargement of Central and Eastern European countries in 2004. The scholarship explored in this section emphasizes the subordinated position of women from post-socialist states in the global economy, the

significance of women's labour to the economy and the state, and theorize sex work as a form of labour (although not necessarily legitimate labour).

Scholars draw attention to grave problems that have inflicted tremendous suffering and violence on many women (and men) in post-socialist societies. However, the tendency toward structural explanations risks obscuring the subjective dimensions of women's migration and how such migration may contribute to shifting gender relations in post-socialist contexts. While Kligman and Limoncelli see poverty as one of the driving forces in women's migration, more recent contributions from the transnational literature complicate the understanding that poverty is sufficient to explain post-socialist women's migration and involvement in sex work (Andriajesvic 2010; Andrijasevic et al. 2012; Davies 2009; Siegel 2012).

There has been little research in this field focusing on the Canadian context. There are some examples of research on migrant exotic dancers as well as on post-socialist migrant sex workers. While a critical legal scholar rather than a transnational feminist, Carolina S. Ruiz Austria's (2010) research on migrant exotic dancers and stripping regulations in Canada is the most recent example on this subject. Austria's critical legal research incorporates a feminist political economic analysis to describe how immigration policy and exotic dancing regulations are classed and gendered. Austria also employs a spatial analysis foregrounding the discursive power of the law to draw "attention to how law creates and shapes spaces in material terms" (2010, 1). She shows that the body of the stripper itself is hyper-regulated. The strip club becomes a location where dancers are highly regulated – by municipal licensing regimes, club practices and by criminal legislation. Austria observes that economic disadvantage often motivates migrant women

to come to Canada to work as dancers, therefore it is a particular group of female, migrant, and economically subordinated subjects who are exposed to forms of hyper-regulation in the space of the strip club.

Audrey Macklin's (2003) research – the only example specifically addressing Eastern European women's utilization of temporary work permits to work as exotic dancers in Canada – likewise employs a legal analysis that incorporates feminist political economy in her manner of highlighting the relationships between gender, economy, and immigration policy. Macklin describes a situation where migrant exotic dancers are positioned through competing discursive and regulatory frameworks that leave them vulnerable to harm and exploitation. Macklin concludes that the dancers are marginalized through competing discourses on morality, crime, work, and human rights.

There are two studies that explore the qualitative experiences of migrant exotic dancers in Canada. Patricia Diaz (2007) looks at the experiences of Latina exotic dancers in Toronto, women who preceded the arrival of post-socialist women. She describes the legal and regulatory practices that produce conditions in strip clubs where women experienced severe labour rights violations, including at times forced and coerced labour. She shows that the migration of Latin American women existed in a context of unequal power relations, framed by Canadian immigration policies, relations of economic exploitation between North America and Latin America, racism, and patriarchal gender relations. Diaz describes many instances of deplorable working conditions in the clubs, including instances of coercion and deceit, and links these to the stigma of sex work, racism, and regulations surrounding immigration and exotic dancing that heavily regulate workers yet afford them few rights.



Lynn McDonald and Natalya Timoshkina's (2007) research explores the experiences of Eastern European migrant sex workers in Toronto as well. Their research describes the sex sector as a space of violence and exploitation and, despite their expressed desire to centre women's agency, the authors emphasize the conditions that led to the women's vulnerability and their negative migration experiences. While the researched women were rendered as victims – making this study an unlikely candidate for inclusion in a transnational feminist project – it is the only example dealing with the experiences of post-socialist migrant sex workers in the Canadian context. McDonald and Timoshkina documented the experiences of post-socialist exotic dancers and massage attendants in Toronto and found numerous instances of debt-bondage, deceit, abuse of authority, and forms of economic exploitation such as excessive fees. These findings are similar to those of Diaz (2007) and are corroborated by personal narratives such that from Timea Nagy (n.d.). The sex sector is conceptualized as a space of violence and exploitation, and the authors write that “countless aspects of the women's lives and work within the sex trade establishments in Canada were controlling, exploitative, and discriminatory – integral components to trafficking in women” (2007, 224).

Interestingly, however, McDonald and Timoshkina also found that many of the women interviewed did not come from poor or deprived economic circumstances, had advanced educational qualifications, and that two women actively sought out the services of smugglers to come to Canada.<sup>54</sup> While these findings pose challenges to the dominant human trafficking narrative that emphasizes poverty, lack of education, and force, the researched women nevertheless are positioned as victims constrained by circumstances.

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<sup>54</sup> Similarly, while Timea Nagy (n.d.) identifies as a survivor of sex trafficking, her narrative also recounts her active engagement with smugglers to come to Canada, highlighting the far from straightforward relationship between structure, agency, and coercion.

This highlights the need for a critical reading of the post-socialist in human trafficking narratives, as well as the dangers that emerge when socioeconomic conditions are permitted to over-determine explanations for women's migratory experiences.

Perhaps not surprisingly given migration trends following the collapse of socialism and European enlargement, much research in this field has emerged from the European rather than the Canadian context. Transnational feminist Rutvica Andrijasevic's research (2010) puts forward a complex, interdisciplinary analysis linking feminist studies of migration and sex work in Europe to changes in labour and citizenship regimes. She highlights the role the state plays in creating immigration and labour regulations that permit the exploitation of migrant workers in the sex sector. Andrijasevic proposes that it is the denial of Eastern European, non-EU women's ability to work in regulated prostitution sectors (where they exist), the denial of their ability to work legally, restrictions on women's legal mobility, the criminalization of prostitution, and exclusion from basic social rights that produces economic exploitation and violence in the sex sector. She challenges the dominant narrative of trafficking through analyzing Eastern European sex workers' narrative accounts of migration to Italy to work in outdoor, third-party controlled sex work. While Andrijasevic's research describes how the state contributes to creating conditions of exploitation for migrant sex workers, she takes an approach that engages equally with questions of subjectivity, and proposes that changes in governance give rise to novel subject positions for migrant women. Thus, she engages with governance practices but gives consideration to how these practices intersect with the personal projects and subjectivity of sex workers themselves.

Drawing some similarities to Andrijasevic's research, Anna Agathangelou's (2004) work examines the role the state plays in creating conditions enabling the exploitation of Eastern European sex and domestic workers in Mediterranean states. Agathangelou's work is of interest because, as I will discuss further in this section, she attends to questions of race and class. Agathangelou employs a materialist feminist approach that prioritizes the importance of women's exploited labour power in the production of subjects; her approach sees the capitalist system of production and state regulation as central to the formation of a class of female reproductive workers whose labour is exploited and a privileged class who benefit from their labour. For Agathangelou, "desire" is both produced through specific gendered, raced, and classed relations of capitalism but also satisfied through these same relations. She presents a theorization of the desire industries as "the neoliberal capitalist relations... organized to make possible the exploitation of the surplus-value of reproductive labour (sex and domestic)" (Agathangelou 2004, 10-11). The desire industries are comprised of Eastern European sex and domestic workers "fenced-off to the margins of the formal capitalist economy" (2004, 23). Like Andrijasevic, Agathangelou sees the state's regulation of migration as central to the creation of an exploitable group of workers.

Agathangelou's overall project, which is to advocate for "free and equal relations of love, sexuality, and comradeship" outside of the capitalist system of production (Agathangelou 2004, 177), diverges from the approach taken within much transnational feminist scholarship. Scholars within the transnational paradigm are more inclined to centre the personal projects of migrants themselves and propose changes to immigration and other regulatory regimes in order to obtain rights for migrant workers regardless of

which sector they work in (see Agustín 2007; Davies 2009; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). Sex worker advocates tend to be “‘agnostic’ about the commodification of sex per se” and are concerned with the conditions under which work takes place (Kotiswaran 2011, 10). Agathangelou’s approach is influenced by the writing of early socialist feminists such as Alexandra Kollontai (1977), who was strongly opposed to material interests in personal, intimate relationships and set economic concerns apart from mutual attraction and desire (see Kotiswaran 2011, 54).

Feminism has had a longstanding engagement with historical materialism, including Marxist, socialist, and materialist feminist traditions. Rather than focusing mainly on class or sex as seen in Marxist and socialist feminism (Tong 2009), materialist feminist centres a class analysis while attending to the “material realities that bind race, gender, sexuality, and nationality to labour” (Hennessey and Ingraham 1997, 2). The central difference between radical feminism described at the start of this chapter and materialist feminism is the former emphasizes patriarchy and the latter class and capitalism as central to women’s oppression. However, there are points where the two traditions dovetail on questions of prostitution and the relationship between sexuality and economics, which may account for the casting of the post-socialist sex worker as a victimized or non-agential subject within literature from both of these theoretical approaches.

Both transnational and materialist feminist scholarship critiques women’s position within the capitalist system and the exploitation of their sexual labour power. However, differing from the transnational paradigm, some of the materialist feminist literature also incorporates elements of radical feminist theorizing (for example, Parvulescu 2014).

Kotiswaran (2011) argues there is a degree of compatibility between radical feminist theorizations of prostitution and perspectives from materialist feminists insofar as both theoretical traditions problematize the commodification of sexual labour per se; thus there are points where materialist and radical feminist traditions intersect. Kotiswaran states that, with few exceptions, materialist feminists are opposed to framing sex work as legitimate work. While the work of scholars examined in this study overwhelmingly theorizes prostitution as work, there appears to be ambivalence about the legitimacy of sex work that I contend is evident in the tendency for scholarship drawing on materialist feminism to conceptualize the sex sector as a zone of abjection or exclusion (for example, see Agathangelou 2004; Parvulsecu 2014; Penttinen 2008), a topic I will turn to in the following section.

Suchland's (2015) *Economies of Violence* is a novel example of work employing a materialist feminist analysis yet bridging the theoretical space between post-socialism and transnational feminist studies. While Suchland's innovative contribution critiquing dominant juridical responses to sex trafficking through the lens of post-socialism addresses a significant gap in feminist scholarship; her avoidance, in her concluding section, on rights for sex workers as well as her cautious and tepid support for the decriminalization of prostitution speaks to some tensions surrounding the commodification of sexual labour common to materialist feminism more generally (see discussion on Jaggar 1997 in Chapter 2).

Agathangelou's (2004) work, however, is of note because it is one of the earliest texts to theorize the specific forms of racialization<sup>55</sup> of Eastern European migrant sex

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<sup>55</sup> Agathaneglou uses the language "racialization" in her work.

workers as white in terms of race but not in terms of class, engaging with the specificity of the post-socialist context.<sup>56</sup> Agathangelou also alludes to the operation of the “whore” stigma and more directly to nationalist discourses about belonging by explaining that Eastern European women are seen as “desirable,” “foreigners,” and “undesirable” at the same time (2004,15). This resonates with the work of both Macklin (2003) on discursive representations of post-socialist exotic dancers in Canada and Andrijasevic (2007) on visual representations of post-socialist women in anti-trafficking campaigns. Both Macklin and Andrijasevic point to the presence of nationalist discourses that see post-socialist societies as sources of criminality, which constitutes a narrative of alterity that positions post-socialist societies as fundamentally different from Western societies.

With the exception of McDonald and Timoshkina’s (2007) research, the authors discussed in this section are challenging the dominant human trafficking narrative that favours law enforcement approaches without addressing structural factors that give rise to conditions that facilitate the exploitation of sex workers’ labour. However, there is also a risk that structural conditions can be used to over-determine the experiences of migration. This may result in the denial of migrants’ subjectivity and the reinforcement of established understandings rather than the production of new theorizations. In positioning migrant women’s decisions as conditioned by their socioeconomic context while leaving other subjective factors unexamined, researchers, perhaps unwittingly, can objectify the women and appropriate their experiences.

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<sup>56</sup> Remmenick (1999), Hughes (2000), Gülçür and İlkaracan (2002) and Malarek (2003) describe the “Natasha” discourse, but do not subject it to analysis. Later writers, such as Andrijasevic (2007) and Penttinen (2008) describe forms of ethnosexualization of post-socialist women, presenting more fulsome discussions than in the earlier texts.

## Post-socialist Sex Work and Abjection

Abjection has been used with some frequency in the academic literature to theorize the experiences of post-socialist sex workers. Motifs of abjection have also been used in Canadian government discourse to make intelligible the experiences of post-socialist exotic dancers who were described as victims of trafficking and sex slaves.<sup>57</sup> The discursive linkage made between abjection (lack, violence, and disorder) and the post-socialist may be indicative of Koobak and Marling's observation that there is often a "modernist progress-narrative" present within feminist writing on the subject (2014, 332). My intention is not to perform a thorough analysis of abjection within the literature or government discourse, but to highlight the connection between post-socialist women's recurring representation as victims of sex trafficking and the position of the abject subject as a method to critique the representation of post-socialist sex workers.

A number of the studies in this section draw on different theoretical traditions from the literature discussed thus far – cultural studies and post-structuralism – although some share a critique of capitalism common in literature in the transnational paradigm (for example, Parvulescu 2014). Perhaps owing to the usefulness of abjection in the fields of international relations and cultural studies, there are a number of more recent studies on trafficking and post-socialist sex work that employ this concept (Parvulescu 2014; Russell 2013; Suchland 2013<sup>58</sup>). The influences of post-colonial scholarship in conceptualizing prostitution as a space of violence and degradation involved in the production of subjects may also have contributed to creation of fertile intellectual ground

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<sup>57</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (27 September 2005), p. 8106 (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP).

<sup>58</sup> Suchland's use of the post-socialist abjection in a different manner than the other authors discussed here to critique the representations of sex trafficking in the film *Lilja-4Ever*.

for notions of abjection to be applied to theorizing sex trafficking (for example, Alloula 1986; Razack 1998).

In the academic literature, scholars draw on the work of Julia Kristeva (1982) and Judith Butler (1993) to conceptualize abjection, as well as Giorgio Agamben's (1998) concept of homo sacer and the camp. The concept of abjection, however, is typically not used to critically read the positioning of post-socialist sex workers but rather to represent their experiences of victimization (an exception here is Suchland 2013). Some scholars have used the concept of abjection to critically theorize representations of sex workers. Caitlin Janzen et al. (2013), analyzing the representations of street-based sex workers in Canada, show that sex workers are signified as abject through a variety of motifs, such as imagery of violated female bodies and reference to "contaminants" such as HIV or other infections. These writers explain how motifs of abjection are used to create an emotional affect reinforcing the women's positions as victims, particularly victims of sexual violence. Janzen et al. emphasize how such representations contribute to the Othering and exclusion of sex workers.

Suchland (2013) offers a critical reading of abjection specific to the post-socialist context. Suchland critiques the use of "inert and scared" post-socialist feminine bodies to relay narratives of sex trafficking (2013, 370). She suggests that the state of abjection conveyed by the post-socialist victim of sex trafficking is produced by an "uncritical and oversimplified western gaze" (Ibid.) and that post-socialist abjection exists as a referent for the failure of state socialism. While Andrijasevic (2007) does not employ the concept of abjection, she critiques the use of representations of Eastern European's women's victimized bodies in anti-trafficking campaigns showing how images of the violated



feminine body are used symbolically to stabilize the boundaries of home and nation that are shifting through contemporary forms of migration. These insights taken alongside critiques of the positioning of the post-socialist within feminist scholarship suggest a need to critically consider how the experiences of post-socialist sex workers are represented in research on sex trafficking.

Scholars employing the concept of abjection are often exploring questions about corporeality within neoliberal globalization. For instance, Elina Penttinen's (2008) work asks, in the context of globalization, what discourses constitute the sex worker subject and how are these subject positions embodied by sex workers themselves? As noted already, scholars draw on the theories of Kristeva (1982), Butler (1993), and Agamben (1998). Anna Agathangelou's work (2004) also shares some similarities with these authors theorizing post-socialist sex work with the concept of abjection as she describes the sex sector as a location that is materially and symbolically fenced-off from the spaces occupied by bourgeois and/or citizen subjects. Writers such as Amy Russell (2013), Anca Parvulescu (2014), and Penttinen (2008) represent the sex sector as a space that embodies violence, disgust, or harm; the sex workers located in these spaces are subject to violence and exploitation with impunity.

While the use of abjection to theorize sex work does not reflect the transnational feminist theoretical tradition this study is set within, abjection nevertheless is found within some of the more recent theorizing on sex trafficking and post-socialism (Parvulescu 2014; Penttinen 2008; Russell 2013). I am cautious about the usefulness of the concept of abjection for theorizing "sex trafficking" as it would not fit into sex workers' analyses of sex work (see Jeffreys 2015) nor contribute to their political

projects. I have concerns that the quickness with which authors locate post-socialist sex workers as abject or excluded may also reflect the influence of radical feminist theorizing on sex work and human trafficking (for example, Hughes 2000, 2004). Kotisawaran (2011) suggests the general opposition to conceptualizing sex work as legitimate work by materialist feminists has left a lacuna filled by radical feminism. The commitment of scholars to presenting theorizations of sex work characterized by negative experiences, such as sexual abuse, violence, and exclusion, may indicate that understandings emerging from radical feminist theorizing remain deeply entrenched within theorizing on trafficking.

Penttinen (2008) investigates the effect of neoliberal globalization on women's bodies and subjectivities; she is making an intervention into the field of IR that seeks to insert the body into discussions of globalization. Her research is based on interviews and observations of Russian and Baltic sex workers in Finland. She uses an ethnographic, narrative approach that draws on postmodern and standpoint feminism. Penttinen is concerned primarily with how globalization enacts subjects into being, that is, "how globalization is a system of power that subjectivates" (Ibid., 138). She argues that the subject position of the "Eastern girl," a specifically gendered and ethnicized rendering of an immoral, sexually permissive Eastern European woman (2008, 1), is brought into being through forces of globalization through women's need to cope with economic conditions. For Penttinen, globalization concretizes at the individual level through prostitution,<sup>59</sup> a "shadowscape" where the abject bodies of sex workers become located.

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<sup>59</sup> Elina Penttinen, *Globalization, Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking* (New York NY: Routledge, 2008), 2.

Penttinen draws on Butler's idea of the social abject to theorize the global sex sector. She suggests that the category prostitute can be understood as a category of abjects created through the subjectivating power of globalization. Penttinen explains that for each woman in sex work, the position of the abject is redone and enacted individually, such that "her position is not only about subjection as subordination, but subjectivation in the position of the abject" (Ibid., 87). Rather than seeing globalization as producing opportunities for enacting agency, she proposes rather "it creates concrete constraints and controls" (Penttinen 2008, 7). Penttinen does not deny that abject subjects have agency; however, she understands this agency to be constrained and limited.

Penttinen describes how Russian and Baltic sex workers use money made in sex work to buy luxurious things (2008, 77) and appropriate and perform the position of the Eastern girl (Ibid., xv) to make money from clients, both which could be read as expressions of agency. However, rather than employing a culturally-specific analysis to capture the meanings of the women's actions, she explains their behaviour by suggesting that they have embodied the logic of neoliberal globalization. She writes, "the foreign, ethnic prostitute or sex worker incorporates and embodies the logic of globalization, which is the logic of marketization and commercialization of everything including bodies," (Penttinen 2008, 57). While certain forms of subjectivity are indeed produced and valorized by neoliberal globalization (Ong 1999; Parreñas 2001), Penttinen's assessment risks being read as an expression of the moral poverty of post-socialist sex workers, one that resonates with the idea of the "reproachful victims" put forward by Jacobson and Skilbrei (2010). Penttinen appears to be influenced by understandings from both radical and materialist feminism, that there are some forms of labour that should not

be commoditized. Further, she neglects to engage with scholarship describing how the neoliberal state creates conditions that structure sexual economies, facilitates the exploitation of sex workers, or, to use her language, produces shadowscapes of prostitution.

Amy Russell (2013) also bases her research in post-Soviet<sup>60</sup> women's narratives and is interested in exploring corporeal experiences of sex trafficking, as is Penttinen. Her analysis is based on applications for visas made available for trafficked women by the state of Israel. Russell analyzes the women's narratives through Kristeva's notion of abjection, and shows how the women's narratives of trafficking, in relation to their bodily boundaries, is expressed through motifs of dirt, smell, disgust, and pollution. For Russell, boundary transgressions (i.e. sexual violation) result in conditions of abjection for the violated body. Russell is attempting to shift the focus from discussion about legislation to the experience of the actual body in sex trafficking, and proposes the idea of bodily permeability as a way to conceptualize trafficking.

While not denying the experiences of violence the women in Russell's research have endured, a limitation of this study is that the narratives the women offer are necessarily shaped in relation to the category victim as they are seeking to be defined as victims of trafficking vis-à-vis the state. Thus, this research may in fact be describing how experiences of trafficking are represented by women seeking to claim official victim status. Narratives of human trafficking and prostitution must be considered in relation to the discursive power of the law and of notions of feminine respectability that inform what constitutes legitimate victimization. My comments are not intending to call into question

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<sup>60</sup> Russell employs the language "post-Soviet" rather than post-socialist.

the validity of the women's experiences, but rather to emphasize the need for researchers to appreciate that experiences are interpreted through particular discursive frameworks and theorizations.

Anca Parvulescu's (2014) work entitled *The Traffic in Women's Work: Eastern European Migration and the Making of Europe* links together a variety of theoretical traditions and is an example of truly interdisciplinary writing on human trafficking. The idea underpinning Parvulescu's writing is that the traffic in women is a form of Europeanization – rather than a consequence of a pluralizing Europe – and “what is called *enlargement* or *integration* is a process deeply invested in East European women's bodies, sexuality, and labour” (2014, 7). Her linkage of women's labour to migration and citizenship in the context of an expanding Europe is similar to that put forward by Andrijasevic (2010). However, Parvulescu's writing draws on the anthropological tradition of Lévi-Strauss and is based in ideas about the exchange of women, including women's labour. Parvulescu is concerned with women's classed and ethnically-stratified labour, such as that undertaken by nannies, domestic workers, and sex workers, and she sees labour as being central to the traffic of women as it is understood in the anthropological tradition, as an exchange of women (see Rubin 1975).

Parvulescu grounds her analysis of sex trafficking in cinematic texts and employs Agamben's concepts of homo sacer and the camp. She uses Giuseppe Tornatore's film *The Unknown Woman* (2006) as the basis for her analysis, which is the story of a trafficked woman who endures numerous forced pregnancies and has her children sold for profit to wealthy couples. Parvulescu theorizes that trafficked sex workers are a contemporary version of the figure of homo sacer – a figure abandoned by law – and

proposes another type of camp that the female homo sacer lives in, the sex trafficking camp, which distributes women's reproductive labour. Parvulescu's defines these conditions as a variety of slavery, for which she relies on Orlando Patterson's (1982) definition of slavery as a condition of natal alienation. Drawing on this definition, Parvulescu explains how "natal alienation, coupled with everyday dishonour as well as actual or virtual violence, desocializes and depersonalizes the slave and produces... .. *social death*" (2014, 81). Parvulescu's likening of forced sex work to forced reproduction suggests that, in her text, sexual labour is not understood as separate from reproductive labour, an approach not supported by the work of materialist feminists such as Truong (1990).

Parvulescu's analysis portrays the sex sector as a site of extreme violence. The main character (Irena) in the film suffered nine forced pregnancies in twelve years and lived a life marked by constant pain and injury. Here, Parvulescu is showing how specific social relations transform women's sexuality into products to satisfy reproductive and other needs, based in Gayle Rubin's (1975) analysis of the sex/gender system. Parvulescu recognizes that both sex work and other forms of work can be equally violent contingent on conditions of labour. Yet, in her conclusion, she draws upon materialist and radical feminist analyses to propose a solution to the trafficking problem, one that buttresses the distinction (and tension) between economics and intimacy and whose subtext is subtly prohibitionist. While she theorizes Irena's labour as productive and shows how her labour is exploited through the social relations of the sex trafficking camp, she draws on socialist feminist Kollontai to advocate for free love – love outside the bounds of economic compulsion – as a "way out" of the trafficking problem (Parvulescu 2014, 144); she is

also explicit about the need to work from within the radical feminist tradition. Rather than proposing a solution to eliminate sex workers' economic oppression that exploits women's reproductive capacities, she proposes an avenue out of their political condition of oppression by manner of free love.

In advocating such an approach, Parvulescu does not engage with Maria Mies' analysis explaining how violence against women is "a mechanism in the process of ongoing 'primitive accumulation' by which ... men accumulate wealth and productive capital" (Mies 2014, 5). And while violence occurs in many sites – the sex sector is one of them – another of those sites is the private family and household. From this perspective, the experience of "free love" relationships with men would not be enough to end violence and exploitation inherent in a system that demands women's unpaid labour. In Parvulescu's work it is possible to detect Kotiswaran's observation of a general discomfort within materialist feminism to conceptualizing sex work as legitimate work as women's reproductive labour in marriage serves a number of needs as well, namely those of capital.

Concepts such as abjection, exclusion, and social death have appeared with some frequency in recent analyses of post-socialist women's migration for sex work, which is why they are important for this discussion. While it is clear that these scholars are writing empathetically about the difficult and violent circumstances many women face, there are significant problems with the direction this writing takes. The quickness with which scholars link sex workers with abjection suggests a commitment to reaffirming existing theoretical orthodoxies about migration for sex work and sex work itself. Theories of migration typically focus on a variety of "push-pull" factors: reconfigurations of

international capital; or displacement by war, violence, the feminisation of poverty (Agustín 2007), or demand for sex (Hughes 2000, 2004). Agustín explains that in these dominant formulations, there is “little room for [migrants’] desires, aspiration, anxiety, or other states of the soul” (Agustín 2007, 17).

Further, the use of abjection in these studies does not contribute to a critical reading of the post-socialist though Suchland (2013) demonstrates this this is also a fruitful approach. While discussions about the conditions under which the commodification of sexual labour occurs are important areas of continued feminist inquiry, attention should be given to how these theorizations may entrench existing understandings of prostitution, sex trafficking, and the post-socialist.

### **Women on the Move: Mobility, Inclusion, and Belonging**

Differing from approaches emphasizing how structural factors produce forms of violence and exclusion are those scholars who engage with insights from migration studies where there has been an ‘interest in understanding how women’s migration is changing the social and cultural landscapes of Europe’ (Passerini et al. 2007, 1). Luisa Passerini et al. explain how, since the late 1990s, “the study of the relation between gender and migration has foregrounded the dynamic interplay of agency and structure in the organization and operation of the global economic, political and cultural processes that sustain human migration” (Ibid., 2). Giving equal consideration to questions of both structure and agency can lead to analyses exploring the cultural, personal, and emotional dimensions of migration as well as, for instance, poverty or regulations denying women citizenship status.



The way scholars in this section have engaged with questions about women's migration and the organization of sexual labour in commercial sex work has shifted to become more actor-focused (Andrijasevic et al. 2012; Davies 2009; Mai 2013; Siegel 2012). While the methods used in these studies vary, this research is typically distinguished by the presence of in-depth interviews with sex workers (Davies 2009; Mai 2013; Pajnik 2012) and a commitment to prioritizing the individual subject and how she engages with the specificity of her life conditions. Of note is John Davies's (2009) research with Albanian sex workers in France, which is the only example of methodologically sound, in-depth, ethnographic research with women still in their trafficking episode (i.e. working in conditions of force or coercion) that I have been able to locate.

Davies's detailed discussion of the shift between irregular migration and trafficking challenges dominant understandings of what constitutes sex trafficking largely because he shows complex relationships to exist between intimacy and economics, the exact arena where many scholars impose an artificial separation (Zelizer 2005). Some Albanian women in Davies's study were coerced and forced to do sex work by their *Çuna*<sup>61</sup> through a combination of communal pressures from other women, familial obligations, and domestic violence that resulted in system of control and surveillance (Davies 2009, 171-173). Despite the violence and control some of the women were subjected to, they rationalized their situation as being better than other available options:

I used to tell the new girls that being on the street wasn't so bad, it was better than looking after old people and much more money ... also sex is just like cleaning the house or cooking sometimes

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<sup>61</sup> *Çuna* is the Albanian word meaning "husbands" in English.

it's fun and other times it is just work ... I told them not to fuss and get on with it (R1. Davies 2009, 172).

I said [to myself] do you always enjoy it when you do it with your boy ... so what is the difference ... it is like cleaning fish heads (L1. Davies 2009, 172).

The women quoted above were in circumstances of coerced or forced labour, yet they have their own ways of understanding their conditions that differ from that dominant narrative that sees women as waiting to be rescued by law enforcement. While Davies describes situations where irregular migration shifts into trafficking, he likewise challenges the separation between intimacy and economics by showing how coerced sex work and domestic violence in the context of migration are not firmly defined and discrete categories but are deeply interconnected.

The most recent research in this field engages seriously with sex workers' subjectivity at the micro-level and presents insights that constitute a significant challenge to dominant understandings of human trafficking. Some of the most innovative research in this area is ethnographically-driven studies that engage with the specificity of the post-socialist condition (Andrijasevic 2010; Andrijasevic et al. 2012; Davies 2009; Mai 2013). Migration is a central concept through which women's involvement in sex work is understood in the literature, including that of post-socialist women (Andrijasevic 2010; Andrijasevic et al. 2012; Davies 2009; Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002; Siegel 2012). Transnational feminist scholarship has contributed to the reframing of migration for sex work as a pattern of gendered and racialized labour migration in the context of geopolitical and economic differences (Agustín 2007; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Kapur 2005; Sharma 2005). For Laura Agustín (2007), trafficking is the concept of travel bound up with the sale of sex and includes migrants' subjective states such as ambition

and desire. A framework focusing on various aspects of migratory experiences (personal projects, negotiating within set of constraints, using available resources) sits in considerable tension with approaches that see migration as driven by demand (Hughes 2000, 2004) or as a result of political or economic push-pull factors (Kligman and Limoncelli 2005).

One of the foundational studies on post-socialist women's migration and sex work is Gülçür and İlkkaracan's (2002) research on sex workers from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in Turkey, which is one of the earliest examples of scholarship identifying the Natasha discourse. Gülçür and İlkkaracan make numerous insights that remain significant to the understanding of post-socialist women's migratory experiences. They link the sex sector to the "suitcase industry" that emerged after the fall of communism, where women would migrate circularly between Eastern European countries carrying goods for trade in their suitcases.<sup>62</sup> Sex work is one other aspect of trade that emerged as women migrated from their home countries and sought out economic opportunities. Dina Siegel (2012) adds an important dimension to this understanding – women often searched out economically and personally beneficial relationships with male business colleagues in Turkey. This observation is corroborated by Davies's (2009) finding that women sought new male partners and to recreate their lives through migration for sex work. While it appears that mafia (Gülçür and İlkkaracan 2002, 451) or other third parties (Davies 2009) played a role in this movement at different times, this research also suggests that the presence of mafia and third party managers varies through time and can be regionally, if not locally, specific rather than a universal

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<sup>62</sup> A similar occurrence of mainly women "suitcase traders" has also existed in the Caribbean (Kempadoo 2004).

feature of the sex sector. These authors show that, in many cases, migration is part of a strategy to achieve class mobility and adventure, far from being something that is singularly imposed upon the women.

Davies (2009) and Siegel (2012) present some of the most interesting literature on post-socialist women's migration for sex work. Many studies of trafficking begin with assumption that trafficking is something that happens to women; however Davies and Siegel present an actor-centred approach to understanding women's migration. In introducing his study, Davies explains that he subjugated the usual factors assumed to be the vectors of trafficking (criminals, demand, economics) and instead focused on the "actor-oriented use of trafficking for personal development" (Davies 2009, 243). This points to a more useful starting point for inquiry into sex work, migration, and trafficking than the frameworks we have inherited through international law and activism.

Davies considers experiences of trafficking to be part of a crisis in migration order, whereby there is a mismatch between opportunities for personal advancement, women's social networks, and legal avenues for migration. He shows that Albanian trafficking to France began with younger women deceived into contrived, patrilocal marriages; eventually these women were replaced with older, divorced women who chose to go to France for sex work. The older women felt their lives in Albania were intolerable (because of the stigma associated with being a divorced woman) and actively engaged with trafficking networks to obtain an opportunity to start again, either by meeting a new husband or by earning money for a home or business. The younger, married women – many of whom were under varying degrees of control – often would leave situations of trafficking once they had strengthened their social networks in France, thereby acquiring

the resources to, in some cases, simply leave the city and relocate to another area outside the control of their *Çuna*. Davies found that most of the women resolved their circumstances of being controlled and forced into sex work by their *Çuna* on their own without the help of police or social services and, in some cases, returned to sex work but under conditions where they exercised control over their work and earnings.

Sharing some similarities with findings in Davies's work, Siegel (2012) found that Eastern European and Russian sex workers in Belgium and The Netherlands were motivated to migrate by opportunities to make money and to travel, to meet friends, business partners, lovers, or husbands. However, her work also highlighted vertical mobility within the sex sector itself. She identifies what she calls a phenomenon of female entrepreneurship in the sex sector in these states by both Eastern European and Nigerian women (2012, 265). Many women, often building on their with experience in sex work, become owners or managers of their own sex-businesses.<sup>63</sup> Siegel writes that "former Bulgarian and Moldovan prostitutes are investing money in brothels in their home countries as equal partners of their former pimps" (2012, 256).

The more recent research which draws on insights from studies of women's migration shows a shift toward actor-centred understandings, challenging the reliance on demand or poverty that researchers often rely on to explain trafficking. Davies's (2009) approach, to reject the usual causal factors, produces some of the most innovative insights

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<sup>63</sup> This finding is similar to Kotiswaran's (2011) observation about sex workers in the Indian cities of Tirupati and Kolkata; after gaining experience and money in the sex sector, sex workers often begin to own or manage their own brothels (typically while continuing to do sex work).

into trafficking. Regrettably, owing possibly to accusations of fraud made against him,<sup>64</sup> his work not been widely engaged with by academics or policy makers. The research in this section suggests that the explanatory strength of structural analyses emphasizing factors such as poverty or demand can be challenged by analyses that engage with specific experiences of migration. It may be that migration for sex work is best understood as sets of specific and contingent heterogeneous experiences that can be considered in relation to structural factors.

### **Centering Sex Workers' Agency and Subjectivity**

Hülya Whitehead and Judy Demirdirek (2004) explain that debates on prostitution and human trafficking are often informed by approaches emphasizing structural conditions rather than looking to ethnographic accounts to explain how post-socialist women come to understand their migration experiences. They remind us that there can be significant differences between how sex work is represented within organizational structures, such as governments or NGOs, and how it is understood within the lives of sex workers themselves highlighting “the need for a grounded, ethnographic approach to [the] subject” (2004, 5). One of the recent trends in the literature on migrant post-socialist sex workers is a move to micro-level, ethnographic accounts of migration and sex work that often emphasize women’s subjective meanings and understandings. Many of these accounts challenge and disrupt dominant assumptions of sex work and human trafficking,

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<sup>64</sup> Julie Bindel, “The Shocking Tale of John Davies, Pro-prostitution Academic and Trafficking Denier, Recently Jailed for Fraud,” *The Feminist Current*, June 10, 2016, <http://www.feministcurrent.com/2016/06/10/john-davies-pro-prostitution-academic-trafficking-denier-jailed/> (accessed December 13, 2017).

and for that reason they are some of the most interesting and compelling research currently available.

Penttinen's (2008) research is an example of the earlier work looking at sex workers' subjectivities, however her work differs significantly from the authors I discuss in this section. Penttinen's interest is to theorize how globalization enacts particular subjects into being, and she is interested in how Russian and Baltic women embody and perform the position of the Eastern girl (Penttinen 2008, xiii) whom she characterizes as abject (Ibid., xv). Penttinen's research begins from the position that the Russian and Baltic migrant sex workers she interviews are already the outsiders of globalization, a position that appears perpetual and unchanging. One of the limitations of this approach, and research similar to it discussed in preceding sections, is that it does not entertain possibilities for sex workers' inclusion, even if only partial. It also brackets the sex worker subject off from other domains of life where she may experience political, social, or other forms of inclusion.

Scholarship by Andrijasevic et al. (2012) challenges the perspective of Penttinen by showing how migrant sex workers enact themselves as active citizens. Through collective mobilization during the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration gathering in Brussels in 2005, sex workers' political engagement challenged the understanding of migrant sex workers as perpetual outsiders (Andrijasevic et al. 2012). While a number of scholars and sex workers' advocates are challenging dominant representation of sex workers as victims, many researchers continue to present understandings of prostitution characterized by negativity and lack from which the sex worker subject cannot recuperate in the context of her work in the global sex sector.

Both Davies (2009) and Andrijasevic's (2010) research highlights the importance of subjectivity and agency in migrant post-socialist sex workers' ethnographic narratives to understanding migration for sex work and make arguments for inclusion rather than exclusion. Andrijasevic highlights the multiple and at times contradictory ways the women position themselves with respect to norms around femininity and in relation to available legal and discursive frameworks of prostitution. In simultaneously employing a variety of discursive elements and motifs, such as "force" and poverty, the "not-prostitute"<sup>65</sup> discourse, denying sexual pleasure or desire for money, positioning themselves as professionals, or demonstrating their financial success, Andrijasevic argues that the women are actively claiming subject positions for themselves that are not permitted for non-European Union migrant women in sex work (Andrijasevic 2010, 113).<sup>66</sup>

Andrijasevic proposes that in the women's narratives a rearrangement of feminine subjectivity is emerging, and that it is this emergence of new subjectivities that opens space for social and political transformation. She proposes a framework of differential inclusion (2010, 125) whereby women are enacting inclusion despite restrictions placed on their movement and participation in sex work. Andrijasevic concludes that analyses privileging "the notion of exclusion and seeing sex workers as paradigmatic examples of new forms of exclusions are inadequate for understanding the changing modes of governing and the emerging political subjectivities in Europe" (2010, 25). That is, conceptualizing sex workers as exemplars of exclusions produced through the economic,

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<sup>65</sup> Andrijasevic explains that the researched women's self-representation as "not-prostitutes" enabled them to see themselves as "normal" women and facilitated them leaving sex work (2010, 90-92).

<sup>66</sup> At the time her writing, the women in Andrijasevic's study were citizens of non-European Union countries of Eastern Europe and did not have the right to free movement in EU member states, and were subjected to visa requirements.



political, and cultural processes of neoliberal globalization is inadequate to capture the ways in which sex workers' migration may be giving rise to novel cultural and political transformations that are changing Europe itself.

Davies similarly positions sex workers as agents striving for social inclusion by migrating to engage in sex work. He provides contextual information regarding post-communist migration strategies that is not emphasized in other studies of trafficking in post-socialist Europe, particularly those that address Albania specifically (see Bekteshi et al. 2012; Malarek 2003; Shelley 2010). Davies's findings show support for the understanding that, in light of experiences of oppression under communism, the desire for a better life in the post-communist context and the realization that it may not be possible in Eastern Europe may have constituted an intolerable situation for many people, particularly women. Siegel's (2012) research suggests it may also be possible to consider migration out of post-communist states as an expression of a desire to overcome boredom, lack of opportunity, and lack of stimulation (2012, 259). Importantly, these authors show that economic "push-factors" are not sufficient to theorize migration and human trafficking.

The women in Davies's research described being generally displeased with the economic situation in Albania but all of them consistently centred the disadvantages of being a woman in Albania as reasons for wanting to leave. According to Davies, women in Albania encounter significant constraints on their behaviour circumstances that were reflected in the researched women's narratives:

You have to understand ... is it worse for village girls but even if you are a town girl if you are seen by yourself walking in the street in the evening ... you are a prostitute ... if you are seen

talking to a boy on a bus ... you are a prostitute ... if you go to a disco and dance with a boy ... you are a prostitute ... if you wear fashionable clothes ... you are a prostitute ... so why not go to Italy and really be a prostitute (A1, Davies 2009, p.138)?

For the younger married women who, such as A1 above, who were often deceived into contrived patrilocal marriages, the decision to accept the relationship with their *Çuni* (who appropriated some portion of their income from sex work) was at the same time an opportunity to leave Albania (Davies 2009, 144). Thus, while deceit was involved, there was nevertheless a desire to escape the situation in Albania that conditioned the situation to begin with yet presented women with few opportunities to do so.

The women in Davies's study also described how being a divorced woman in Albania can be even more difficult; divorced women experience severe social exclusion, stigma, and are unlikely to remarry. For these women, it is not poverty, lack of education, unemployment that is the main impetus for leaving Albania, but the desire for social inclusion in the form of finding a husband and achieving a happily married life (Davies 2009, 149). While this desire may seem incomprehensible as an agential position from a Western feminist perspective, expressions of femininity associated with Western modernity were discouraged under the Soviet worker-citizen model and may have produced the conditions for some post-socialists women's valorization of middle class, Western life style (Roman 2003; Suchland 2015). It was the socially excluded, divorced women who were proactively seeking out traffickers and increasingly were involved in trafficking (Davies 2009, 149). Another women explained her situation in this way:

My family keep telling me that I am a disgrace to them and that I should have never left my husband even if he did beat me ... I had no peace and no life in Albania ... If I could find a new

husband in the West I could start a new life (11, Davies 2009, p.135).

The researched women described such conditions as intolerable. Despite their desire to leave Albania, Davies found that the women were consistently refused visas (Davies 2009, 156) and that it was significantly easier for young men to obtain visas (Ibid.,157). There appears to have been few opportunities for women to exercise control over their own migration, highlighting yet another gendered disadvantage.

This sort of rich, ethnographic research illustrates the value of a grounded, ethnographic approach suggested by Whitehead and Demirdirek (2004). The rich detail of Davies's research illuminates how the dominant trafficking discourse can flatten complex power dynamics and subjective experiences, risking a misunderstanding of what harm or exploitation might mean in the context of migrants' lives. Davies's ability to avoid imposing meaning on the researched women's experiences permits him to move beyond literature that assigns meaning to women's actions and attempts to explain their behaviour based on economics, demand, or other structural factors (for example, Hughes 2000, 2004; McDonald and Timoshkina 2007). While the women in Davies's research experienced many of the factors, such as poverty, gender discrimination, and violence that are often cited in the literature on human trafficking, his highlighting of their subjective experiences and understandings shows the women to be meaningful actors in their lives within the constraints they are presented with. Davies calls into question the usefulness of existing anti-trafficking strategies, as they typically do not address the problems the women are attempting to resolve through trafficking.

Interestingly, the women in Davies's research were also aware of how they were represented in Western European media as "Natashas," a representation they rejected. The women actively sought to avoid detection, and felt that women who were discovered by police or social services were stupid or inept (2009,122). As one of the researched women explained, "My name is not Natasha! and I am not an idiot" (Davies 2009, 123).

Far from the image of the naïve Natasha, Dina Siegel (2012) and Nick Mai (2013) show that post-socialist migrants in the sex industry desire to enact themselves as cosmopolitan, global subjects through income and experience gained as sex workers. Siegel and Mai's research shows that sex work may be a means through which individuals attempt to enact positions as insiders of globalization rather than perpetual outsiders. Mai's work addresses the broader post-communist cultural context of migration and points to limitations of applying Western theories of sexual slavery to analyse the post-communist context. Similar to Andrijasevic (2010), Mai is interested in subject formation, and observes that subject formation in the post-communist context evolves through the challenging and reproduction of existing processes that are unique to post-Soviet states, that is, the dissolving of individual differences into an official discourse of the collective. There is a desire, on the part of young people, to experience themselves as individualized subjects who express their identities through consumption, i.e. "making money' abroad and 'performing it'" (Mai 2013, 110). Mai explains that this process takes place against the backdrop of a post-communist transitional space where the values of collective social formations (family, community, state) are still powerful. Thus, he shows the development of a particular contradiction between desire for individualized, cosmopolitan modes of being and the existing socio-cultural context, including

heterosexist gender roles. The insightful point Mai makes is that sex workers' personal understandings of benefits, exploitation, consent, and bodily integrity in sex work are situated within a broader context of cultural, social, and political transformation (2013, 111).

Actor-centred, ethnographic research highlights intricate and complex dynamics of post-socialist women's involvement in sex work. Participation in sex work becomes a way for women (and, in Mai's research, men) to meet gendered expectations about providing for one's family, thereby reinforcing heteronormative gender roles (Mai 2013) in the context of transition. Interestingly, however, in this context sex work also becomes a morally viable project, thus presenting a challenge to normative gender roles resulting in what Andrijasevic (2010) identifies as the emergence of new female subjectivities. The ways in which the women position themselves in the narratives below shows a variety of ways in which normative feminine subjectivity is both reinforced and challenged at different moments:

This other friend of mine, a fellow-cleaner... ..she told me: 'why don't you do [prostitution]? Only there you can make lots more money!' I thought about it for a long time, I wasn't sure. Sometimes I am happy about it, sometimes I'm not ... I'm treated as a normal person when I am there, no one says: 'you are a prostitute!' It's normal (Olga. Mai 2013, p.112).

I don't know anything about trafficking, but I do know that there are pimps ... [My boss] used to threaten me. He used to say that if I left [sex work] he would have said to my boyfriend – because he knew about me. That my boyfriend does not know what I do ... I hate my boyfriend, I hate him ... I hate him so much! I usually buy for him two packets of cigarettes per day ... I am the only person bringing money home ... I afford everything for my boyfriend and the children (Julia. Mai 2013, p.114).

You can earn a lot of money if you have sex with men, and you can have a good looking boss, and you can buy whatever you like: dresses, jewels, cosmetics, telephones. And if you have a lot of men, they pay you and give you presents. And you can go to Paris and Amsterdam and London. This is so cool” (A 13-year-old Roma girl in Bulgaria. Siegel 2012, p.259).

Olga’s narrative suggests a level of ambivalence associated with sex work, however she has rationalized it as a way to make money and thus it has become normalized to some extent for her. There appears to be a recognition and acceptance of the relationship between sex and money that has become morally justifiable, suggesting the emergence of new feminine subject positions as explained by Andrijasevic (2010). Julia’s narrative highlights the complex relationship between economics and interpersonal relationships (see Mai 2013, 114). She resents her boyfriend, but yet she feels an obligation to provide for him and the family that are rooted in ideologies about appropriate gendered behaviour about acting as a good wife. Lastly, interesting because the speaker is a girl, the desire to embody a cosmopolitan mode of being is evident in this narrative, and sex work is conceptualized as an occupation associated with money, glamour, and opportunities for class mobility. A Roma girl’s bold demand to access cosmopolitan, bourgeois subjectivity through sex work, even if glamourized, speaks a desire to exceed boundaries of acceptable feminine gender roles and behaviour.

Ethnographic research describing post-socialist women’s subjective investments and understanding of sex work challenges and complicates the dominant paradigm of human trafficking as well as prohibitionist perspectives that emphasizes structural factors. The narratives described above cannot be collapsed into categories of “forced” or “voluntary” without sacrificing the complex economic and emotional dynamics of the

situation. Rather than being perpetual outsiders of globalization, the research examined herein shows that individuals enact – with varying degrees of success – positions as insiders of globalization.

The scholarship I have been exploring in this discussion on centering sex workers' subjectivity, particularly that of Andrijasevic 2010, Davies 2009, Mai 2013, and Siegel 2012, theorizes aspects of migrant sex workers' experiences in ways that may lead to the development of novel understandings that can intervene and challenge dominant approaches. Significant elements these writers bring to the discussion of sex work and migration are: 1) theorizing migration for sex work through a conceptual framework that engages with structure and agency, and is concerned with possibilities and transformation rather than lack or negativity; 2) theorizing experiences of migration for sex work in terms of inclusion rather than exclusion, victimization, or abjection. This research also invites continued exploration into the complex ways women employ their bodily capital and sexual labour in relationships that exist along a continuum of commercial and non-commercial interactions (see also Cabezas 2009). This leads to an unsettling of a firmly delineated concept of "sex work" and challenge the tensions between intimacy and economic evident in radical and materialist feminist theorizing.

Agustín observes that sex work is often a way for female migrants to realize their particular goals and can work to restructure existing gender relations (2007, 90). The idea that sex work can be used by migrants to restructure or to challenge established hierarchies remains a significant (and contested) insight. While markets for sexual labour operate within and reproduce prevailing race and gender hierarchies, they also lead to the creation of novel forms of subjectivity as shown by Mai (2013) and Andrijasevic (2010).

These authors show that through sex work, migrant women claim subject positions that are denied to them and also negotiate complex new roles and modes of being by, for example, satisfying desires for cosmopolitan modes of being within a context where collectivist values are still salient, as a way to fulfill one's role as a wife or mother, a way to migrate and work in a context where the state denies enactment of mobility, or as a way to assert autonomy, or recreate one's life by finding a new husband. Thus, the theorization of prostitution presented by these writers is characterized by possibility and transformation, rather than wholly negative attributes such as violence, representing a departure from much feminist scholarship on prostitution and human trafficking.

There is also the theorization of migration for sex work in terms of inclusion rather than exclusion or abjection. Andrijasevic et. al (2012) explore sex workers' collective mobilization during the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration in Brussels, 2005, as a form of political engagement and participation. They explain that this was an "act of citizenship that create[d] a collective political subject" (2012, 512); sex workers were enacting inclusion as active political subjects. Further exploration of questions of sex work and migration from the perspectives of inclusion, possibility, or transformation may lead to further interesting insights and potentially new theorizations.

Davies (2009) research on post-socialist sex workers also presents a way forward in conceptualizing human trafficking through demonstrating how Albanian women often became involved in trafficking networks as a means to overcome social exclusion in their home countries. He proposes that trafficking can be understood as a strategy for personal development, whereby women avail themselves of opportunities to achieve desired ends



within structural constraints. The idea of involvement in trafficking networks can be a strategy for personal development, coupled with ontologies of migration for sex work emphasizing possibilities and transformation and a focus on inclusion rather than exclusion, may also provide direction toward novel frameworks of understanding.

The authors in this section use ethnographic research to show how post-socialist migrant sex workers are engaging with structural factors that condition their lives and give form to the sexual economies they are positioned within. While neither representing the caricature of the duped victim of trafficking nor the liberated sex worker, the women's narratives highlight the multiple, contradictory, and sometimes "messy" ways in which individuals negotiate between available opportunities and desired goals. This research challenges the large body of research that positions migrants and sex workers as perpetual outsiders of neoliberal globalization, instead emphasizing their striving for inclusion within the societies they live within.

### **Post-socialist Sex Trafficking and State Interventions**

As I noted at the start of the chapter, abjection does not constitute a central concept within this project; however, it can be utilized to critically engage with the literature on post-socialist sex trafficking where sex workers are presented as victims situated in the exploitative "shadowscape" of globalization. The similarities between the abject subject and the position of the victim, a linkage made by Janzen et al. (2013), are significant as both abjects and victims are denied subjectivity and are thus objectified. This insight informs the critical orientation this project takes to Canadian government discourse, where post-socialist exotic dancers were rendered as victims and had their

experiences appropriated by parliamentarians to argue for policies that would deny them access to temporary work permits and the opportunity to migrate to Canada. Researchers, however, show that it is the approach of limiting avenues for migration that intensifies women's vulnerability to exploitation by curtailing opportunities for them to obtain desired goals and objectives (Andrijasevic 2010; Davies 2009).

A critical engagement with government discourse suggests that feminist researchers must be attentive to how, as Anna Carline (2012) writes, "the state is involved in reality construction" (2012, 213). Sharron A. FitzGerald (2012) expresses a related concern that "feminists have been slow to develop a critique of how governments instrumentalize discourses of trafficked women's vulnerability to sexual harm to re-organize the limits of state power" (2012, 230). Many anti-trafficking advocates are employing the language of "vulnerability" and "sexual exploitation" that is subsequently taken-up into policy discussions, yet there has not been sufficient attention paid to how the state, through policy-making, is employing these concepts and what consequences this may have.

Scholars have expressed grave concerns about the intersection of anti-human trafficking policies and state interests that seek to limit migration (Berman 2003; Kapur 2005; Sharma 2005). As Anne Gallagher wrote of the U.N. Protocol on human trafficking, human rights may have played a role in galvanizing collective action, but it was "the sovereignty/security issues surrounding trafficking and migrant smuggling that [were] the driving force behind such efforts" (2001, 976). Border practices remain a central factor shaping migration experiences. Andrijasevic's (2010) research shows that border controls and visa policies worked to exacerbate Eastern European women's

vulnerability to abuse in the sex sector in Italy because of the near impossibility of obtaining a visa and residing in Italy legally. This is a similar finding to that of John Davies (2009) in his research with Albanian sex workers in France: “young [Albanian] women were almost always refused visas by the [European] embassies unless considerable bribes up to € 1500 were paid to various agents. Young women who could access student visa programmes or met the stringent requirement for Schengen visa issuance were considered exceptional” (2009, 155). James Campbell’s analysis of border practices in Albania further adds that border practices become “projected back into the national territory” producing a criminalized sex sector (2013, 81).

Newer research centering the state examines nationalist interests involved in the history of international law and activism on human trafficking (for example Limoncelli 2010). Regrettably the relationship between the state, human trafficking discourse and policy, the constructs of whiteness and white femininity, and sexualized nationalism have not been extensively engaged with. A noteworthy exception here is Don Kulick’s (2005) article analyzing what he calls the entrenchment of a national sexuality, Sweden’s policy of *jämställdhet* (gender parity), and the anti-prostitution/anti-trafficking law that criminalized the purchase of sexual services. Kulick explains that Sweden’s law criminalizing clients was suffused with concerns about national identity and cultural difference, and was a message to the rest of Europe that Sweden does not accept a liberal approach to prostitution. These sentiments arose with concerns among Swedes about their immigrant population, such as rapes by immigrant men, “honour killings,” and female genital mutilation, and other behaviours and attitudes considered un-Swedish. Stephanie Limoncelli’s (2010) research shows that, historically, feminist concerns about trafficking

in women ‘gave way to nationalist, anti-immigrant sentiments concerned with keeping undesirables out’ and resulted in increasing social control of women (2010, 2). For instance, in the Swedish case, the passing of the law criminalizing the purchase of sex resulted, according to Kulick, in the immediate deportation of non-Swedish sex workers. Limoncelli concludes that it was the importance of women’s labour to nation-state and empire building that was the central concern underpinning increased control of women’s sexual labour and mobility in anti-trafficking policies historically.

The literature overall shows that limited attention has been paid to how the state constructs “human trafficking” and the “victim of trafficking” in public policy discussions. Post-socialist feminine subjects are frequently positioned as victims constrained in spaces of violence, yet there has not been careful attention given to how they themselves have been positioned as objects of knowledge, an area this dissertation begins to address. Likewise, articulations of nationalism and sexuality within human trafficking narratives have also remained under-theorized, particularly relating to the post-socialist context, an area this research will also contribute to developing.

## **Conclusion**

There is not an abundance of literature on post-socialist sex work from within the transnational paradigm, though there are a number of recent studies that are beginning to explore sex work, migration, and the specificities of the post-socialist context. This literature offers a number of insights and highlights the importance of attending to the interaction of structure and agency, including subjective dimensions. The reliance in the literature on structure to explain conditions for post-socialist migrant sex workers often

leads to the positioning of this group as abject, which constitutes a form of alterity-making. The innovative approach shown by scholars who conceptualize post-socialist sex workers using notions of inclusion and who attempt to describe the emergence of novel subject positions offers advantages over radical and materialist feminist positions that show a discomfort with commodified sexual labour itself.

In the following chapter, I will direct attention toward the Canadian context through an analysis of Victor Malarek's book *The Natashas* that linked the international Natasha discourse to concerns about human trafficking in Canada. Malarek's writing is informed by normative understandings of women's sexuality and prostitution within feminist theory while being suffused with nationalist understandings about Canadian civilizational superiority.

## Chapter 4: “Good” Men and “Bad” Sex: The Post-Socialist Sex Slave and the Canadian White Knight in Victor Malarek’s *The Natashas*

### Introduction

“The so-called fourth wave in trafficking was like a tsunami of women’s bodies into the illicit market of forced prostitution” writes Suchland (2015, 62) of the shift in popular and policy discourses of sex trafficking in women from Central and Eastern European countries and Russia during the early 1990s following the end of the Cold War. A number of media stories in Canada likewise noted the influx of Soviet exotic dancers<sup>67</sup> during this time, which shifted around the mid-1990s to emphasize exploitation of women by organized crime, prostitution, and “brutal” treatment of the dancers.<sup>68</sup> It was the publication of a highly successful exposé on sex trafficking entitled *The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade* by journalist Victor Malarek (2003) that solidified the rhetoric on post-socialist sex trafficking in the Canadian context through the creation of linkages between the international discourses on the Nathasha trade (see Hughes 2000; Suchland 2015, 54) and concerns about the expansion of Eastern European organized crime groups into Canada (Malarek 2003, 49). *The Natashas* was the first trade publication addressing

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<sup>67</sup> Bob Brent and Tony Wong, “Influx of Soviet Strippers Could Be Start of Trend,” *Toronto Star*, sec. A2 final edition, April 3, 1991; Pat Conroy, “Soviet ‘Models’ Arrested for Stripped Without Visas,” *Toronto Star*, sec. A1, April 1, 1991; Estanislao Oziewicz, “Foreign Strippers May Face Barriers McDougall Wants to End Special Status,” *Globe and Mail*, sec. A1, April 5, 1991.

<sup>68</sup> *Globe and Mail*, “Visas for Strippers Refused,” *The Nation*, sec. A1, May 10, 1995; Estanislao Oziewicz, “Foreign Strippers Denied Job Permits Embassies Site Exploitation of Women and Possible Links to Organized Crime as Reason,” *Globe and Mail*, sec. A5, May 10, 1995.

the trafficking of Central and Eastern European and Russian women directed at a Canadian audience, which positioned Victor Malarek as an expert on human trafficking.

In the first part of this chapter, I use *The Natashas* as a site to explore ideologies of sexuality and nationalism in narratives of post-socialist sex trafficking in Canada. In his text, Victor Malarek is introducing an updated white slave narrative into the Canadian context, and fomenting a connection between international and domestic discourses. In the second part of the chapter, I analyse Malarek's testimony during the 2006 sex trafficking study as it provides an opportunity to gain a more in depth understanding of how Malarek conceptualizes sex trafficking and the problems it poses for Canada. His off-the-cuff and, at moments, uncouth style of engagement permitted him to elaborate in a manner less likely to be found in a published work such as *The Natashas*.

The analysis presented within this chapter illustrates how concerns about sex trafficking have been mapped onto geopolitical concerns, particularly fears of immigration and transnational organized crime. While Malarek styles himself as a defender of women's rights, a veritable "good guy" among innumerable pimps and exploiters, his concerns about sex trafficking appear to be based in fears about the threats posed by migrants and an interest to protect the whiteness of the Canadian nation. As I noted in Chapter 1, "white" refers not singularly to skin colour but to established relationships that protect white wealth, privilege, and power (Kempadoo 2015). Protecting the whiteness of the nation is about the creation of policies, practices, and knowledges that secure existing hierarchies and relationships of superiority and inferiority whereby the privilege of dominant groups is protected.

## Positioning Victor Malarek in Debates on “Sex Trafficking” in Canada

The publication of *The Natashas* launched a successful career for Malarek as a policy expert on sex work and human trafficking, and he has gone on to publish a related book called *The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It* (2009). He has been referred to or quoted numerous times in government proceedings related to human trafficking.<sup>69</sup> Senator Andreychuk, during her speech to the Senate in support of the law criminalizing human trafficking in Canada in 2005, went so far as to say that the book should be mandatory reading.<sup>70</sup> Malarek testified during the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women’s sex trafficking study, where his testimony was referenced numerous times in the Standing Committee’s final report, *Turning Outrage into Action to Address Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Canada* (Canada 2007a). Despite his anti-prostitution, anti-immigrant rhetoric, he continues to speak on questions related to sex work and human trafficking nearly sixteen years after *The Natashas* was initially published.<sup>71</sup>

Malarek conceptualizes sex trafficking as a global problem through temporal categories where the world is imagined as being divided into modernity (the West) and those outside of modernity aligned with tradition and backwardness, who threaten modernity’s insiders with criminal disorder and unprogressive forms of sexuality. Sexuality is a key register through which understandings about national and civilizational

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<sup>69</sup> Canada, *Debates of the Senate* (1 November 2005), p. 2038 (Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator CPC); (6 February 2008) p. 677 (Hon. Gerard A. Phalen, Senator Lib.); *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7990 (Mr. Vic Toews, CPC MP).

<sup>70</sup> Canada, *Debates of the Senate* (1 November 2005), p. 2038 (Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator CPC).

<sup>71</sup> March of the Red Umbrellas, an organization hosting an event in St. Catharines, Ontario, to commemorate the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, invited him as a keynote speaker in 2015. Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/events/1649933921945106/> (accessed December 15, 2015).



progress are given meaning in *The Natashas*. Malarek's linkage of post-socialist masculinity to violence and his depiction of the post-socialist context as repressive to women works to affirm Canada and the Western world as modern, progressive locations that must be defended against incursions by outsiders (i.e. immigrants).

Most individuals who are aware of the influence that Victor Malarek has had on discourses on human trafficking in Canada are also familiar with Benjamin Perrin. Perrin is author of *Invisible Chains: Canada's Underground World of Human Trafficking* (2010) and former policy advisor to the Prime Minister's Office during 2012-2013 until his connection to Senator Mike Duffy's expenses scandal became public.<sup>72</sup> He is currently a law professor at the University of British Columbia and founder of the anti-trafficking NGO The Future Group, an organization that has been influential in the development of anti-trafficking policies in Canada since the early 2000s. Perrin has occupied some of the most influential positions within Canada's anti-trafficking infrastructure.

Given Perrin's importance within the Canadian context, it would be remiss not to mention him as he was also a witness during the sex trafficking study and his testimony is referenced elsewhere within this dissertation. However, Perrin's most significant contribution, *Invisible Chains*, was published several years after *The Natashas*, after the major debates involving post-socialist exotic dancers, and is not specifically concerned with post-socialist sex trafficking (although the issue is discussed briefly). I will return to Perrin in the Conclusion, as *Invisible Chains* lends insight into how discourses on human trafficking in Canada have shifted over time.

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<sup>72</sup> Campbell Clark, "Court Hears Harper Adviser Was Told Twice of Duffy Payment Arrangement," *Globe and Mail*, August 20, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harpers-top-aide-knew-about-secret-payment-lawyer-tells-duffy-trial/article26040794/> (accessed December 21, 2015).

*The Natashas* is an example of investigative journalism rather than a theoretical or empirical contribution. While Victor Malarek quotes American radical feminist scholar Donna Hughes, an influential anti-prostitution/anti-trafficking advocate, once in the text, he does not engage with her theoretical work nor does he rely on any feminist scholarship to support his positions even while the presence of radical feminism is palpable throughout the book, for instance in his reference to Coalition to End Trafficking in Women and his nod toward the Swedish Model of criminalizing the purchasers of sex.

Further, he leaves unaddressed the historical linkage between the contemporary international movement against human trafficking and the nineteenth century movement against white slavery, as well as the feminist activism that has shaped dominant understandings on a global scale. During the large scale migratory movements of the nineteenth century, the movement of women was identified by early feminist activists as trafficking and white slavery and served as the basis for the first international agreements on human trafficking (Kempadoo 1998). This early activism by Victorian feminists relied on discourses of slavery to argue against prostitution and trafficking (Irwin 1996); Jo Doezema explains the notion of “slavery ...served to demonstrate the need for feminist intervention” (2010, 72). The contemporary violence against women paradigm is the heir of sexual slavery discourses and radical feminist activism that has shaped how trafficking in women has been conceptualized internationally (Suchland 2015). Malarek’s approach is influenced by the legacy of feminist theorizing and activism on the traffic in women, yet he relays a narrative fixated on masculinist structures, primarily intergovernmental organizations and state actors (United Nations, International Organization for Migration, U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act, law enforcement).

By neglecting any substantial engagement with feminist theorists in *The Natashas*, Malarek distances himself from the scholarship that has produced many of the ideas about sex trafficking he is relying upon (Barry 1979, 1995; Jeffreys 1997; Leidholdt 1993; Raymond 1998). His perspectives gain their authority from his reliance on intergovernmental actors, agencies, and international law. Feminists have critiqued the manner of representing international politics as a masculine structure upon which the lives of women depend (Enloe 1990), and the masculinist orientation of international politics has been critiqued as privileging men's knowledge and experience (Tickner 1992). For Malarek, government complacency and indifference along with the demand for purchased sex are the fundamental problems that produce sex trafficking, and the solution he proposes is state-centred – action from government leaders and law enforcement. Malarek explains how “the only thing that will send these thugs scurrying back into their rat holes is the full force of the law – unwavering prosecution, heavy prison time, and confiscation of all profits,” (2003, 261). The ability of Malarek to position his voice in the text in relation to masculine state structures allows him to be taken up as an expert and to make ideological claims that have the appearance of neutrality yet which are deeply contested within feminist scholarship.

Lastly, as Prahba Kotiswaran observes about American journalist Nicholas Kristof, Victor Malarek is involved in the “ultimate liberal fantasy” of saving the vulnerable and enslaved (2014, 6). Malarek's text revolves around highly gendered and imperialistic rescue narratives where he appears to be speaking for all of humanity in his outrage at the horrors he is observing. He visits numerous sex sector establishments in Central and Eastern Europe as an observer, positioning himself as a Canadian “good guy”

who would never consider buying sex – something he considers to be an undignified commodification of women. Malarek wants to help the women by exposing the realities of their abuse and victimization and divulging the failures of states and of law enforcement in protecting them. While it is precisely his privilege as a white, Western man that permits him to enter the territories of foreign states, voyeuristically observe the bodies of sex workers who never consented to be part of his exposé, to write about what he has seen and then fashion a career for himself out of it, he appears as a Canadian human trafficking hero, a contemporary iteration of the proverbial white knight.

### **Methodological Limitations in *The Natashas***

While Malarek's work has been incorporated into a number of policy discussions and he has been an influential force shaping Canadian discourse, the research and data in *The Natashas* does not withstand social scientific scrutiny. While I acknowledge that his book was not meant as a scholarly work but rather as a call to action, it has nevertheless been taken-up as empirical research by policy makers. The book itself is absent of formal references or a bibliography and, even when studies or reports are mentioned in the text, the information provided is difficult to evaluate: titles, authors, dates, or places of publication are not provided. The evidence presented relies heavily on the author's own account of his observations and interviews with sex workers in Central and Eastern European countries, and his recounting of trafficked women's experiences as told to him directly or indirectly through discussions with social service providers or law enforcement officers. In one example, Malarek stops his car along Highway E-55, a well-

known location for finding outdoor sex workers close to the Czech-German border.

Posing as a client, Malarek engages one young woman:

As I stared in stunned silence at the hapless sea of humanity on E-55, several women gingerly stepped into the street and yelled at passing drivers ... A slim, blond woman with shoulder length hair darted over to my car. As I slowed down in the crush of traffic, she pulled open the door and jumped into the passenger side. With a wave of her hand, she directed me to drive over to a secluded, wooded area where she demanded 1400 Czech crowns in advance. I did as she said but told her that I wanted to talk. She looked dumbfounded, but shrugged her shoulders and nodded. Throughout the brief, fifteen-minute encounter, her hard brown eyes never left the dashboard (Malarek 2003, 25).

Malarek proceeds to inquire about the woman's age and nationality, and how long she has been working along E-55; during their conversation, the woman reported she was an orphan and was tricked into sex work by someone posing as her aunt.<sup>73</sup>

There are a number of serious ethical problems with this scenario, such as the absence of informed consent and deceit. From a social scientific perspective, this research would be considered ethnically dubious for Malarek's failure to examine his motives for the research, his positioning of sex workers as passive subjects within his project yet placing them in a position that could expose them to harm, the asking of inappropriate and unnecessary questions, and for his contribution to understandings which support criminalization of sex work.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, it would be unlikely for an ethical review board to give approval for such a project.

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<sup>73</sup> Jacobsen and Skilbrei's (2010) research with Russian sex workers in Norway reported that sex workers found clients' concerns about whether they had been trafficked or were obliged to sell sex because of poverty "tiresome" and "a hassle." The women claimed that these inquiries wasted time and that they preferred clients who were not interested in their lives (2010, 205).

Celine Parreñas Shimizu (2010), in her problematizing of the imaging of Asian women in gonzo “sex tourist” porn, highlights the unreliability of what we see in textual representations of sex scenes that link to human trafficking and the need to differentiate between representations and realities. Shimizu shows that within a Western and male-controlled framing of the women’s experiences, Asian sex workers are rendered as victims of trafficking and the complex manner through which they negotiate their life conditions is elided completely. Likewise, one may also ask whether Malarek’s rendering of the women as victims in his text in fact confirms their victimization and the existence of sex trafficking. Malarek assumes, as he does in many other instances within this text, that his illustrations of sex trafficking are evidence of sex trafficking.

Shimizu also explains that sexual imaging of Asian women establishes “how sexuality is tied to sexual and racial difference” (2010, 161), eroticizing differences and inequalities. Malarek’s sensationalist approach similarly eroticizes the gender and geopolitical inequities that condition circumstances for the women he depicts working along E-55.

All were women and girls from Ukraine, Romania, and Russia. Their wares were their bodies, in various degrees of undress. They posed salaciously in skin-tight, midriff-bearing jeans, skimpy halters and stiletto heels ... Women pulled up their T-shirts and flashed their breasts. Others shouted at passersby, promising to do whatever they ask (Malarek 2003, 25).

In Malarek’s treatment of this scene, the power difference between the women’s Easternness, their semi-nude bodies, their economic desperation, and himself, the Western masculine subject observing the scenario, becomes sexually charged. According to

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<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of sex worker-driven research practice and the ethics of research with sex workers, see Jeffreys 2015.

Shimizu, the sexual imaging of the Asian female subject confirms a specific gendered and racialized hypersexuality for the viewer. In Malarek, the representations of Eastern European women could similarly be read as hypersexualized as signaled by their flashing of their breasts and wearing of stiletto heels, but meanings associated with white, post-socialist femininity impart a sense of ambiguity regarding their sexual subjectivity. Immediately following the carnivalesque scene above, he explains how prowling close by there are “men in sweat suits with gold chains dangling around their necks. Their only function is to keep a watchful eye on their merchandise and collect the money,” (Malarek 2003, 35). Despite the women’s apparent sexual permissiveness, they remain white female victims of sexual violence who present the Western, bourgeois readers with the opportunity to experience him- or herself as saviours (see Agustín 2007; Cole 2012; Heron 2007).

In these examples, Malarek also shows a conceptual misunderstanding present throughout *The Natashas*; he *was* involved in an exchange of money for a type of service from a sex worker. From a materialist feminist perspective, he is not significantly different from the clients he finds so distasteful. Although he did not engage in a direct sexual service, he still derived benefit from the sex worker’s sexual labour (the affective meanings she created with her body, sexuality, and subjectivity). Malarek’s conceptualization of labour relies upon liberal theoretical understanding of labour as a remunerated, productive activity within the public sphere, rather than on theorizations from materialist feminism that see women’s sexual and reproductive labour as a type of productive work (Federici 2003, 2012; Truong 1990). Lacking the understanding of sex work as a social-economic activity in itself, prostitution is seen as a symptom of women’s

oppression and attendant exclusion from the legitimate labour market as well as a site of harm. Malarek's demand that "we," those of us wishing to end human trafficking, should be helping women find real jobs rather than opportunities to take their clothes off for money, is reflective of this understanding (2003, 266-267).

In a lengthy chapter on methodology, John Davies (2009) explains that the Albanian sex workers in his research used "unfolding accounts" to explain their sex work in order to control the ability of others to know them where there is a lack of trust or confidence in researchers. Davies explains "these unfolding accounts [were] dependent on the increasing level of trust being extended to the cultural advocate<sup>75</sup> and particularly the realization of the non-prejudicial and non-judgmental attitude toward the women's involvement in sex work" (2009, 84). Nowhere in *The Natashas* is there evidence of Malarek reflexively considering the relationships between himself and the sex workers he encounters; for instance, how his position as a Western, male journalist may influence the narratives the women offer him or his interpretation of these narratives. He does not consider that the women may not trust him and may not want to give him access to their personal thoughts and experiences. He also utilizes their narratives as direct accounts of empirical realities rather than considering them as sites where subjectivity itself is formed (see Andrijasevic 2010, 18). Andrijasevic underscores the importance of considering sex workers' narratives in relation to dominant legal and discursive frameworks surrounding

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<sup>75</sup> Davies drew on the method of cultural mediation because his research was highly participatory and required someone who "shared significant experiences and identities with the main subjects of the research" (Davies 2009, 75). However, because a significant element of his project was to support migrant sex workers in making claims for their rights, the research relied on a cultural advocate, a cultural mediator who could act as a community leader and assist the process of relocating power from the host to migrant community (Ibid., 79).



prostitution and the interest the women may have to position themselves as moral agents within these frameworks (2010, 113-114).

Throughout *The Natashas*, the methods involved in gathering information are unclear, the data unverifiable, and in many cases Malarek's approaches are ethically questionable. Malarek's perspectives have been given significant consideration in the policy making process based on the merit of his work in *The Natashas*, however the work is empirically unsound and contains serious ethical problems that should warrant its rejection entirely for use in evidence-based policy making.

### **Ethnoseexualization of Post-socialist Women**

*The Natashas* communicates a highly gendered set of values surrounding masculine and feminine subjects that essentializes masculine and feminine sexualities. The notion that men's sexuality outside of emotional constraints is predatory, that sexuality is central to women's oppression, and that prostitution is an institution defined by men's sexuality thoroughly saturate the text and comprise its normative framework. In the opening pages of *The Natashas*, Malarek writes "to their clients, [Central and Eastern European prostitutes] are nothing more than an interchangeable body. It doesn't matter that they're enslaved; sex for money is a business transaction" (2003, 4). Here, economics and intimacy are firmly bracketed-off from one another. He describes how it is men's "insatiable, self-indulgent appetite for purchased sex" (Ibid., 45) that creates the demand for prostitution, thus it is an institution shaped by men's desire. Malarek links commercial sex to a disregard for dignity and human life resulting in the complete debasement of the women involved. While Malarek's theorization of sexuality and

prostitution are deeply political with lengthy theoretical genealogies (Barry 1979, 1995; Dworkin 1981; MacKinnon 1987), he makes it seem that he is articulating a neutral, self-evident framework.

Utilizing understandings associated with race, ethnicity, and gender, Malarek puts forth a specific ethnosexualized rendering of post-socialist femininity linked to passivity and vulnerability to violence and coercion (see Andrijasevic 2007). Malarek depicts Central and Eastern European women as embodiments of idealized feminine sexuality. Their physical attractiveness - their whiteness, cisgenderedness, slender physiques, and often blonde hair - emphasizes their perfection and innocence. A particular vignette will often begin with a description women's physical appearance, highlighting her sexual desirability. Malarek writes, "when Natalie Samosalova walked by, heads turned in Vladivostok. The statuesque nineteen-year-old had tumbling blond hair and bedazzling azure blue eyes" (2003, 69). Elsewhere, reproducing part of a posting from an Internet forum where clients discuss their encounters with sex workers, he writes, "her name is Alina and she is a Russian import. She is tall, long blond natural hair, beautiful eyes and face, nice boobs ... Her performance was magnificent" (Malarek 2003, 88).

Malarek's writing betrays a familiarity with discourses positioning Central and Eastern European women as sexually permissive and licentious, which he comes close to reproducing by continually highlighting the women's sexual desirability. Gülçür and İlkaracan (2002) identify a national Natasha discourse in Turkey where post-socialist women are "portrayed as 'hot, passionate, blond bombshells' who [are] available and willing [to do] any sexual act required of them" (2002, 414). Similarly, in Norway, Russian women are stigmatized as prostitutes (Jacobsen and Skilbrei 2010). Ultimately,

however, Malarek avoids these discourses and closes-off any ambiguity surrounding the women's innocence through emphasizing their lack of choice.

With countless victims clinging to the fairy-tale hope of a blossoming romance and a better life in the West, the pickings are enormous and ridiculously easy. Women are literally lining up in droves (Malarek 2003, 14).

Marika was the perfect dupe. She was desperate for work. Her mother was sick and her father was an unemployed, miserable drunk ... The job offer was her only chance to make things better (Malarek 2003, xii).

Throughout the text, the valorization of the women's physical beauty and whiteness, along side descriptions of difficult conditions or their inability to perceive the realities of their circumstances, signals that the women are not real sex workers but victims – which is the main thrust of Malarek's argument and underpins his demands for their protection. Even if they may look or act like “whores” – they are moral agents (i.e. “good girls”) who have been turned into prostitutes because of post-socialist corruption and gender oppression. He cautions the reader that the overt sexiness prospective clients may observe in Central and Eastern European women is “what the pimps *make certain* they see” (Malarek 2003, 42). Doezema (2010) observes that a young and beautiful innocent who has been deceived into prostitution personifies the typical trafficking victim within early white slavery narratives. Malarek appears to build on this historical narrative to construct an updated, contemporary white slave figure.

Malarek's positioning of the women as innocent and unsophisticated constitutes a specific form of ethnosexualization. His nod toward qualities that make the post-socialist female subject different from the modern, Western, liberated female subject are subtle yet

of critical importance to the text; the Western female subject, in control and empowered, is the point of reference for Malarek's depiction of Central and Eastern European women. Because Malarek's narrative relies on positioning the women as, to use Andrijasevic's (2010, 90-91) language, "not-prostitutes," securing this understanding of Central and Eastern European women as different from Western women is necessary for his narrative to cohere.

It didn't take long for the mob to zero in on the fledgling republics' most valuable assets: beautiful but desperate women and girls – educated, well-mannered, with no future in sight (Malarek 2003, 2).

Slavonic women have always been remarkable for their obedience and willingness to fulfill any wish (Malarek 2003, 90).

The choice of adjectives in the first quote, beautiful, educated, and well-mannered, connotes a femininity that is not yet liberated from traditional feminine passivity yet holds the potential for emancipation (education). Andrijasevic (2010) explains that Eastern European female subjects are often situated in the position of "not yet," not yet in a place where their societies have moved toward democracy and where they are not fully capable political participants (2010, 130).

The second quote, reproduced by Malarek from the web site of an Odessa sex-tour agency, captures discourses surrounding Central and Eastern European women that position them as possessors of an authentic, subservient femininity. Elsewhere he explains that while "at home [in Canada], no always means no," in Central and Eastern Europe women are "desperate and trained to please" (2003, 90). Tuulia Law (2012), writing on Romanian exotic dancers in the Canadian stripping industry, explains that

there was a perception among clients and management that women from Second World countries are less likely to hold feminist beliefs and will be more tolerant of sexism, misogyny, and will be more sexually permissive. Romanian exotic dancers are “rendered more desirable through their perceived lesser emancipation and co-extensive ‘truer’ femininity” (Law 2012, 142).

Penttinen similarly explains that the subject position Eastern girl is a Western representation of the subordinate, sexualized femininity of post-socialist female subjects (2008, 91). Madina Tlostanova, however, shows the historical specificity of discourses positioning white Russian women as “innocent, submissive, and sexually passive” and in need of protection (2010, 81). She reminds us that Russia has been both a colonizer of Central Asia and Caucasus and been colonized by Western modernity (Ibid., 82). In the context of Russian colonization, local Muslim women were understood to manifest sexual passivity and piety, and it was Russian women who were seen to be modernized and as stand-ins for the caricature of “aggressive [female] sexual promiscuity” (2010, 81-82). This representation is in fact the inverse of the Nathasha figure. Tlostanova’s discussion of colonial femininity in Central Asia complicates contemporary representations of innocent Central and Eastern European victims of sex trafficking that Malarek’s relies heavily upon in *The Natashas*.

### **Violence Against Women and Canadian National Masculinity**

It is horrific physical and sexual violence that is the central feature of sex trafficking in the *The Natashas*. Although Malarek notes that some women choose to work in prostitution (2003, 18, 42), sex work and human trafficking are conflated into

one category, that of “sex trafficking.” Malarek employs the language of “slavery” periodically throughout the text, at one point citing radical feminist Donna Hughes’s problematic analogy likening prostitution and trafficking to the transatlantic slave trade (2003, 201-202). Despite this, Malarek himself appears unclear at moments as to whether the problem is one of slavery or deplorable working conditions within a wage-labour relationship, such as being forced to have sex with dozens of clients a day, not being given time off for sick days, and not being able to refuse customers (Malarek 2003, 19). It seems that Malarek’s use of the language of slavery is a device to elicit an emotional response in readers, though in doing so he overlooks the role language plays in constructing understandings that may not reflect actual legal definitions (see Chuang 2013) and which can further entrench conceptual confusion.

The violent destruction of women in forced prostitution is a theme emphasized throughout. Similar to some feminist scholars utilizing the concept of abjection (Parvulsecu 2014; Penttinen 2008, Russell 2013), Malarek likewise constructs the sex sector as an abject space and a repository of violence and disorder. Malarek’s linking of feminine bodies and sexualities with forced prostitution/sexual violence is similar to types of anti-trafficking cultural production that eroticizes women’s victimization (Andrijasevic 2007). His descriptions of violence experienced by women are egregious. He writes about women being beheaded and others whose feet had been placed in concrete blocks, their mouths taped shut, and been killed execution style. Malarek recounts a story told to him by a Ukrainian-Israeli gangster who “chased a stripper out of [the club] and slammed her head repeatedly against the door of his Mercedes until the car was covered in blood” (2003, 54).

Narratives of prostitution in *The Natashas* revolve around young women who are compelled into prostitution because of poverty where they experience violence that debilitates them physically and/or psychologically. Below Malarek recounts the experience of Sophia, as described to him by her, in the “breaking grounds,” places in Serbia where women are imprisoned in “training centres” and “test-driven” (Malarek 2003, 31) before they are forced into prostitution. Sophia recalls:

Those [girls] who resisted were beaten. If they did not cooperate, they were locked in dark cellars with rats and no food or water for three days. One girl refused to submit to anal sex, and that night the owner brought in five men. They held her on the floor and every one of them had anal sex on her in front of all of us. She screamed and screamed, and we all cried (Malarek 2003, 33).

The lack of specificity regarding date and location (these events appear to have taken place in Belgrade, Niš, or Kraljevo at an unknown time), the eroticization of the women’s victimization as the reader imagines the violence inflicted upon their bodies, and the pornographic style of imaging sexual assault should cause the reader to question whether this description is evidence of sex trafficking or a discursive representation of it. In the story told to Malarek by Sophia, the woman described above ultimately hung herself, a metaphor symbolizing the destruction of women in prostitution. Malarek’s understanding of the harms of prostitution reflects ideas about trauma as being central to comprehending the harms of sexual violence for women (see Bumiller 2008).

Victor Malarek’s deployment of violence in *The Natashas* has much in common with representations of domestic and sexual violence more generally. As Kristin Bumiller (2008) explains in her discussion about representations of sexual violence, graphic representations of violence encourage viewers to identify with the horror of the victim’s

experience yet generate little understanding of the context, prevalence, or complex causes of violence. There is little consideration in Malarek's work of the more complex structural factors that constrain women in situations of violence as described, for example, by Davies's (2009) research on Albanian sex workers in France. The graphic representations of violence in *The Natashas* encourage the reader to imagine the harms of sexual violence on women's bodies eliciting fascination and horror, but rely heavily on "bad men" (post-socialist male subjects) or "bad sex" (commercial sex) to explain violence and thus contribute little to more complex understandings.

While Malarek ostensibly offers descriptive accounts of sex trafficking, he is also presenting ideologies linking gender, sexuality, and nation. Throughout *The Natashas*, post-socialist male subjects are positioned as violent, aggressive criminals. Consider the following examples:

Albanian gangs are particularly notorious for their cruelty, terrorizing and torturing their victims and killing uncooperative girls (Malarek 2003, 68).

The only problem with [the witness] was she was so terrified of these [Czech traffickers] because they're big and they're scary and they're mean. She truly believed they would kill someone for \$500 (Malarek 2003, 151-52).

[Ruc's] look was intimidating. A body-builder buff, he wore his gel-slicked hair in a ponytail. He dressed in skin-tight T-shirts, cowboy boots, cheesy sharkskin suits and flashy jewellery (Malarek 2003, 151).

Above, working class, Central and Eastern European men are linked with danger, unpredictability, and violence. Malarek's noting of the men's size, physique, and appearance constructs the men's desire to perform wealth and display masculine sexuality



in non-middle class ways as a marker of their deviance. The central factor that sets post-socialist male subjects apart from the middle class, Western norm of masculinity Malarek embodies in the text is their misogyny and cruelty to women. Central and Eastern European masculinity is “cruel and grotesque” (Suchland 2013, 366). Quoting the same Ukrainian-Israeli gangster discussed earlier in this chapter, Malarek writes “in Russia, it’s quite normal for men to slap women. It’s cultural” (2003, 54). Throughout *The Natashas*, Central and Eastern European societies are constructed as highly patriarchal and “backward” in their disregard for women’s rights.

I am not challenging the prevalence of sexism or violence against women in the post-socialist context. Suchland suggests that *bespredel*, a Russian concept meaning lawlessness and actions outside the limits of acceptability, was engendered among citizens during post-Soviet capitalization and has contributed to an intensification of violence as citizens responded to change and uncertainty (2015, 68). What is of note rather is how, throughout *The Natashas*, Western male subjects are positioned as outside of – or perhaps as having already surmounted – the violent proclivities of the post-socialist man.<sup>76</sup> Further, the whiteness of post-socialist women positions them as both potential members of white, Western nations and victims of their own ethnicized men, rendering them as innocents in need of protection.

Through his construction of the working class, Central and Eastern European male subject and his presentation of himself as a model of ethical masculine behaviour and

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<sup>76</sup> Many Western men in *The Natashas* are not, however, positioned as ethical subjects; the meaning given in the text is that they are behaving in ways that are “below them” and that they should be ashamed of. Malarek notes occasions where US police officers “occupy their off hours in the company of sex slaves” in Eastern European countries (2003, 228) which he proceeds to shame them for. He says that this is an “offensive activity that represses innocent women and girls” and that as long as it continues, the United States should be downgraded from a tier one to a tier three country ranking “with all the embarrassment and disgrace that comes with it” (2003, 255).

morality, Malarek is expressing elements of a Canadian national masculinity. Drawing on Steve Niva's (1998) description of a new iteration of hegemonic masculinity that is "tough" but also "sensitive and compassionate" (1998, 119), I suggest that Malarek's positioning in the text as tough but compassionate, as paternalistic in his desire to protect women while being adamant about women's equality, constitutes an iteration of a Canadian masculinity that marks itself as progressive in relation to Central and Eastern European masculinities. In contrast to the post-socialist male subject, Malarek positions himself in the text in a much different way:

I kept up the pressure. 'Do you have any idea how bad this looks? You're a U.N. cop and you're aware that two foreign girls are being held in a brothel against their will. You've known this since late this morning, and you're here sitting in a bar drinking while they're being raped (2003, 237-8)?'

In the context of describing corruption in the United Nations system, Malarek pressures a U.N. police officer to act on available intelligence and rescue two women from a brothel. Malarek presents himself here as tough and no-nonsense. In this moment, he intervenes into U.N. business in Pristina, Kosovo, where presumably, as a journalist and Canadian national, he has no status, jurisdiction, or influence. His zeal to protect women overshadows the power imbalances and imperialistic impulses inherent in the situation, and positions him as an ethical, Canadian male subject. Malarek's actions place him as one of the good guys if not the central protagonist of *The Natashas*.

The approach taken in *The Natashas* locates sexual violence against women – for instance, the women being raped in the above quote – as central to women's inequality yet disconnected from structural factors. This is illustrative of a critique developed by

feminist scholars such as Suchland's (2015), who explains how discourses of sex trafficking equating it with violence against women obfuscate how the dismantling of state socialism and transition to neoliberal capitalism produced forms of violence which she suggests are inherent to capitalism itself. Malarek's focus on the violent manifestations of patriarchal power as the primary site of women's oppression directs attention away from a framework that sees the operation of power as occurring through gender, class, race, and geopolitical hierarchies of neoliberal globalization.

It is not only post-socialist male subjects, or "bad men," who act in ways that are harmful toward women and who are positioned as unprogressive with respect to gender equality. "Bad sex," or commercial sex, is also understood as harmful with negative effects for women's equality. "Bad sex" embodied in the figure of the client is also utilized to articulate a progressive and enlightened Canadian masculinity:

But more disconcerting is [sex buyers'] unwavering belief that their right to sex overrides the rights of the women and girls they're using. For these men it's all about their needs, and how they satisfy them is their business (Malarek 2003, 78).

Pouring over the postings on the World Sex Guide, you find that most of the men sharing their steamy tales of their purchased conquest aren't the least bit interested in the dignity and rights of the women themselves (Malarek 2003, 93).

In the examples above, harm comes from women's objectification and commodification in prostitution (see Kotiswaran 2011, 25), ideas that can be traced to radical feminist theorizing on sex trafficking that links purchased sex with harm to women and gender inequality. Using this reasoning, he positions sex buyers as possessors of less progressive forms of masculinity – masculinities that harm and disrespect women – forms of

masculinity that are associated in the text with post-socialist male subjects. Thus, the articulation of a progressive, Canadian national masculinity relies on the presence of the less progressive, threatening, and potentially misogynist forms of masculinity. Through drawing on understandings of “good” and “bad” sexuality that position masculine sexuality as predatory and prostitution as sexual harm, Malarek is asserting meanings about masculine and feminine sexualities that have been formulated to incorporate nationalist understandings about the progressiveness of Canada and the West in relation to the post-socialist context.

### **Abjection, Sexual Violence, and Geopolitics**

Victor Malarek contextualizes the experiences of Central and Eastern European women in relation to the collapse of the Soviet Union, not unlike scholars in both the transnational and mainstream literature (Bekteshi et al. 2012; Kligman and Limoncelli 2005; Petrunov 2014). However, in an effort to describe the conditions encountered by Central and Eastern European women, Malarek articulates an understanding of post-socialism itself as an abject space where the figure of the trafficked sex worker is situated. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the recurrent linkage of the post-socialist context with abjection points to the need to question how post-socialism is conceptualized within the Western imagination:

Belgrade is the main center [for apartments] in Serbia. There are also apartments in Niš and Kraljevo. These are places that are like prisons, where hundreds of young women are held until they're sold. It is where the girls are broken... ..Those places are hell (Malarek 2003, 30).

It's lawlessness [that is the source of problems in Kosovo]. The whole place is filthy corrupt. Bar owners don't give a shit about international cops or the local cops. The judges here are lazy, indifferent, corrupt, scared, or related to the accused, or any combination of the above. You can't trust them for a moment (Malarek 2003, 229).

Many [of the rescued girls] bore the telltale signs of torture – cigarette burns on their arms, welts on their backsides and bruises covering their bodies (Malarek 2003, 102).

The quotes above convey a number of understandings about the post-socialist context, described as being “filthy,” and permeated with misogyny, violence, and corruption. These descriptions resonate with examples of abjection described by Russell (2013), where Alina, a trafficked woman, says that she has nightmares where “[she] can see all the ugly faces all the filth and the dirt ... I just feel like I'm a human of a lower state now, a lower level. I feel filthy” (2013, 94).

Such recurrent representations of abjection function as discourses of alterity-making, they produce the post-socialist as Other to the West. Western states then become positioned in relation as sites with the right balance of criminal laws, political and administrative capacity to save post-socialism from itself. This sort of positioning is evident when Malarek explains that “what [was] missing from the equation [was] a no-nonsense, action-oriented sheriff - an individual, or better yet, an influential and powerful nation - to ride in and clean up the mess, convincingly and with authority” (2003, 185). This analogy, tellingly perhaps, invokes the cowboy hero of American Westerns who is emblematic of colonial domination. What he is referring to here is, of course, the United States. Western states, particularly the United States along with the United Nations, are positioned as forces with the potential to intervene and resolve the problems of post-

socialist Europe.

Thus, the framing of sex trafficking in Malarek's work does not serve only to catalogue the harms occurring to Central and Eastern European women, it is also presenting geopolitical understandings that rely on notions of post-socialist Europe as a backward space in relation to the West. Suchland (2013) examines more deeply the geopolitical context that contextualizes trafficking narratives through her analysis of the popular Swedish film *Lilja 4-Ever* (dir. Lukas Moodyson, 2002),<sup>77</sup> which recounts a story about an Eastern European teenager who is lured to Sweden and forced into sex work. She introduces the concept of post-socialist abjection, which she describes as the failure of state socialism that the image of the Natasha has become a referent for in popular culture. For Suchland, sex trafficking is “represented as an effect of post-socialism” (2013, 363).

The narrative Malarek presents contains formulations of post-socialist abjection described by Suchland, an emasculated post-socialist state that cannot protect its women and children from widespread criminalization and misogyny.<sup>78</sup> The figure of Natasha comes to embody these failures: Malarek writes that the girls are the nations' innocent daughters who need the protection of the state, but because the states are corrupt they are deprived of the protection they deserve.<sup>79</sup> However, in her analysis of *Lilja 4-Ever*, Suchland explains that post-socialist sex trafficking narratives contain both anti-

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<sup>77</sup> See also, Skilbrei (2003)

<sup>78</sup> Victor Malarek explains in his testimony during the sex trafficking study that “What has happened is that alcoholism and family breakdown have just devastated those countries. Russia, for example, has over one million children in institutional care—abandoned orphans ... This is because women have been told they have to saddle the responsibility of the family with an alcoholic husband or an abandoning husband ... What happens is that criminals within those countries target every resource they can possibly use and exploit. They've now targeted young women and girls” (Canada 2006g, 4).

<sup>79</sup> Victor Malarek, *The Natashas: The New Global Sex Trade* (Toronto ON: Viking Canada, 2003), 260.

prostitution and anti-migration messaging. From this perspective, protecting women from violence is not the only concern in *The Natashas*; rather, the figure of the post-socialist victim of trafficking sends a message about curbing women's illegal labour migration for sex work.

Malarek's narratives of sex trafficking, in which violence against women figures so centrally, are also situated alongside geopolitical concerns about international law and security:

Professional traffickers, used to circumventing border crossings, engage border authorities in a never-ending game of cat and mouse. They constantly vary their routes to keep one step ahead of the law... ... Along the serpentine border of the European Union, smugglers have established a complex system of well-protected corridors by exploiting 'green borders' or unguarded frontiers (Malarek 2003, 20).

In Moldova, the path to sexual servitude often starts in a tiny, impoverished village, moving swiftly through Romania and into Hungary or Montenegro (Malarek 2003, 21).

The narrative Malarek presents is one of well-organized, calculating post-socialist traffickers who exploit both women and the open borders of the European Union; the fear is of penetration by organized criminals from Central and Eastern Europe into Western Europe and North America. Malarek's utilizes decontextualized incidents of violence to produce fears about rampant sexual terror that he links to ethnicized, implicitly masculine, organized crime and overarching lawlessness in Central and Eastern Europe. His narrative of post-socialist sex trafficking expresses a form of sexualized nationalism, where ideas about sexuality become intertwined with expressions of civilization superiority and inferiority that rely on ethnosexualized renderings of post-socialist female

subjects as victims and male subjects as cruel criminals.

### **Sex Trafficking Study – “End Demand” Politics and Nationalism**

In 2006, Victor Malarek testified as a witness for the Standing Committee on the Status of Women’s sex trafficking study based on the strength of his work in *The Natashas*, a text that dealt with post-socialist sex trafficking mainly in the European context. His presence as an expert on sex trafficking in Canada forms a linkage between the international and the national contexts, and post-socialist sex trafficking is seen as one aspect of the problem of human trafficking in Canada. Malarek’s testimony is rife with discussion about the harms of prostitution to women, however his concerns frequently slip into expressions of anti-immigrant sentiments. The sexual regulation of women and the regulation of immigration are seen as central to national subjects’ collective well-being. As women’s respectable sexuality is a marker of national boundaries, women’s sexual autonomy can be threatening (Mosse 1985). The presence of the immigrant Other can likewise be threatening: “the nation of citizens has historically imagined itself vulnerable to innumerable [outsiders], compelled to resolutely face down the virulent, chaotic, criminal and sometimes even deadly menaces posed by them” (Thobani 2007, 4). That the concerns about harms to women’s sexuality are articulated alongside deep, anti-immigrant sentiments is thus not surprising. A closer reading of Malarek’s testimony shows that concerns about sex trafficking are articulated through fears of migration and transnational organized crime.

In his testimony, Malarek relies heavily on the language of patriarchy and on discourses that see prostitution as central to women’s oppression as he does in *The*



*Natashas*. In his opening remarks, he contextualizes his presentation by stating that prostitution “is the world’s oldest oppression of women” (Canada 2006g, 1). After, he goes on to explain that “very few women ever make a conscious decision to walk the streets, night after night, to service platoons of strange, doughy, greasy, hairy, middle-aged losers... ..only to turn over most, if not all, that money to some disgusting pimp” (Ibid.). Here, as I have shown in *The Natashas*, Malarek involves feminist understandings to inform his theorization of prostitution. The idea that prostitution is contrary to women’s dignity is foregrounded throughout his testimony.

Despite his reliance on the feminist language of women’s oppression and anti-prostitution discourses, a closer examination of his perspectives suggests that Malarek is not so much interested in gender justice for women but only in protecting women from sexual harms and indignities of prostitution. Malarek’s testimony betrays a strong adherence to middle class forms of sexual morality that see the only legitimate expressions of feminine sexuality as being in the private home and family. While Malarek is adamant that women in prostitution must be looked upon with compassion, he nevertheless limits the subject positions that women are permitted to occupy to those acceptable within a heteronormative framework. He explains “we tend to look at prostitutes with a jaded eye” because of their “gaudy clothes” and “slimy make-up,” we “dismiss them with words like prostitute, whore, slut, and harlot” (Canada 2006g, 3). He continues, “We have to stop this kind of thinking and turn it on its heel” (Ibid.). Malarek is calling for respect for sex workers because of their victimized and damaged feminine sexuality rather than critiquing the stigmatization of sex workers as bad women.

Malarek’s calls for compassion toward sex workers are thus deeply moralizing.

While he acknowledges that some women choose to work in prostitution, the way he describes this decision forecloses the possibility that a woman can be both a prostitute and an ethical subject. A sex worker does not deserve respect or compassion because she is human, but because she is a victim:

Again, while it is true that some women do opt for this so-called profession, most don't—studies show this—and no girl does. If they had real control of their lives, virtually every one would opt for a real job that doesn't involve taking off their clothes and servicing platoons of strangers (Canada 2006g, 3).

I, for one, do not believe for any moment that any rational young woman or girl dreams of or for that matter should be encouraged to dream of prostitution as a vocation (Canada 2006g, 2).

The perspectives offered here position women in prostitution as irrational or immoral if they are not forced into sex work – any normal woman would not take her clothes off for strangers. The second comment suggests more directly that he finds the occupation unpalatable. Thus, from his perspective, the only legitimate position for a woman in prostitution is that of a victim. His reasoning asserts firm distinctions between prostitute and non-prostitute subjects setting them up as two separate and opposed categories. While Malarek's writing and testimony regarding gender and sexuality is largely antagonistic to much feminist understanding, because he has linked these ideas with feminist concepts such as patriarchy vis-à-vis human trafficking discourses, it has permitted his ideas espousing a conservative sexual politics to be taken-up as feminist and, further, has positioned him as a legitimate speaker for trafficked women.

In Malarek's testimony, his theorizations about prostitution and sex trafficking are also being articulated temporally; this detail is relevant to the geopolitical context for sex

trafficking narratives. He proposes, perhaps without being aware, that what we are witnessing is something new – and more grave – in relation to what we have seen in the past:

Is this the level to which modern society has fallen, that if you need \$50 or \$100, put out or starve (Canada 2006g, 1)?

Now, because of the Internet and television and many of the shows, and even these crazy rap videos where women and young girls are subjugated into all kinds of sexual positions, guys are beginning to think that this is all right (Canada 2006g, 6)?

Malarek is expressing a desire to return to a mythical national past and traditional gender order where society was ethically and morally sound. He is suggesting that Canadian society is now in a moral deficit; in the past, women were protected from indignities and men knew how to behave. His reference to “rap videos” is racially coded and links to fears of racialized and subaltern masculine sexuality threatening the sexual respectability of national subjects. What is of interest, however, is how he goes on to explain these changes. I propose this is where the geopolitical context, the connection between the international and national, become perceptible in the narratives of human trafficking that Malarek is proffering.

His explanations for the problem of sex trafficking in Canada rely upon concerns about external threats in the form of criminality and cultural understandings that devalue and disrespect women. He is suggesting that something antithetical to Canadian values, harmful to the state and national community is threatening to overwhelm us:

I have travelled around the world in war zones over my 36 years in journalism. I’ve written about the abuse of children, of women, and of the elderly. I’ve never seen anything like this, the explosion

of this. It seems that these men think it's their right, and no one is fighting for these women. We have to be careful in Canada, because it will explode on our doorstep if we continue to turn a tolerant eye to this thing (Canada 2006g, 3).

The terrible things that Malarek has witnessed “out there” may at any moment “explode” in Canada. His meaning here, in the context of his presentation, is that men’s demand, and thus the proliferation of sex markets, is the thing that will explode; the implication is that Canada would be threatened if sex markets were permitted to grow unfettered.

In his testimony, Malarek refers to an earlier book he wrote called *Haven’s Gate: Canada’s Immigration Fiasco*, where he explains that we (the collective national community) “have to worry about what is happening in Europe, with the floods of refugee claimants and all of the other things that are happening with economic migrants, or we will suffer the same consequence” (Canada 2006g, 4). This is an expression of a general fear of migrants. He immediately goes on to explain that years ago the prostitution page in local papers was only one page long, now it’s six pages long,<sup>80</sup> and, if you look at it, “it’s foreign women—Thai, Filipino, Ukrainian, Russian, South American from any South American country you want. So it’s now starting to come here” (Ibid.). Elsewhere he cautions that Canada must be careful about legalization of prostitution, otherwise we “will see foreign women quickly fill the void that local women who have real jobs won’t do” (Ibid., 5).

Despite being resolute about the problem of human trafficking being one of violence against women in *The Natashas* and during his presentation to the Standing Committee, his testimony above seems more ambiguous in terms of identifying what the

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<sup>80</sup> Canada, House of Commons. Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament, No. 027, December 5, 2006, p. 4.

particular threats to Canada are with respect to sex trafficking. The quote on the previous page suggests that the problem threatening to explode in Canada is that of burgeoning, unrestrained sex markets presumably because of the harms this would cause to women. At this moment, he seems to digress from his message that the most pressing problem is that of violence against women and men's demand. His choice of language, that of "floods of refugee claimants and economic migrants," immediately preceding comments about the increasing presence of foreign women suggests that it may be the presence of the women themselves that is the problem and perhaps even that they may be responsible for producing the demand.<sup>81</sup>

A similar ambiguity can be seen in Malarek answer to MP Joy Smith's question about preventing human trafficking at large sports events in Canada (Canada 2006g, 10). In response to her question, Malarek says that young women can be stopped if Canadian embassies deny them visas, but emphasizes that the government must look to who is behind them because organized criminals are always the facilitator.<sup>82</sup> His answer, however, turns to concerns about illegal migration and criminality as he relays the problems that have developed in Western European countries:

In the streets of Rome, Paris, and Berlin, I saw the pimps in the dark alleys and shadowed cars. Those pimps belong to organized crime gangs; they will not let go of this because of the money. The Netherlands and Germany know who the gangs are, and the cops can't do a damn thing about it, because they can't figure out who's legal and who's illegal now. Once you open that floodgate, try to close it (Canada 2006g, 10).

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<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, this understanding is supported by findings in Davies (2009) that show it was the presence of Albanian sex workers on the streets in Lyon that fostered interest in their services among clients.

<sup>82</sup> Canada, House of Commons. Standing Committee on the Status of Women. *Evidence*. 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament, No. 027, December 5, 2006, p. 10.

There is uncertainty surrounding Malarek's assessment of potential problems for Canada. Prostitution markets are linked to organized crime in Malarek's analysis, thus the existence of foreign sex workers invites other types of criminality; the interconnection between sex workers and criminality is one problem he identifies. However, it is unclear which other problem Malarek is alluding to in the second part of the quote regarding legality when he notes that the police cannot figure out who is "legal" and who is not. It seems at first that he is referring to the gangs, however it appears that he may be referring to the presence of foreign sex workers without legal status as the Netherlands and Germany both have legalized prostitution sectors. The problem is not the prostitution, but the presence of illegal migrants and the criminals that arrive with them.

While Malarek begins his presentation with a denouncement of prostitution and foregrounds women's rights within his speech, he introduces concerns about organized crime and illegal migration into a conversation about women's victimization where immigration becomes conceptualized as a central problem. Malarek's position is fundamentally anti-immigrant; a closer reading of his testimony raises questions about the appeal of his analysis for parliamentarians, such that it became highly influential in the government context, when there were other alternatives available.

There is another dimension to Malarek's concerns about threats to Canada, which are understandings that devalue women and are seen to be antithetical to Canadian values and practices. What I propose Malarek is doing in this part of his testimony is articulating a notion of sexual practices that are in line with Canadian values, suggesting a reconfiguration of notions of normative sexuality and nationalism. Malarek's alluding to a mythical national past with a traditional gender order serves to temporally locate the

problems of sex trafficking as something novel to Canada. Malarek contends throughout his testimony that it is the Internet that has enabled men's interest to "buy" women to flourish, thus the Internet becomes central to human trafficking and a key link between the national masculine subject and purchased sex.

In the context of Malarek's anti-prostitution and anti-immigration stance and his equating of prostitution as violence against women, buying sex becomes coded as an activity out of step with Canadian values. He explains that "this entire issue boils down to one word: dignity, the dignity of women in our society" to not be violated in commercial sexual relations (Canada 2006g, 3). Malarek explains that "[he] always say[s] to men, ignore it; don't get involved in it" (Ibid., 9); the "it" he is referring to here is suggestive infomercials for telephone sex, and Internet and print advertisements for sexual services. For Malarek, "men have a choice to say they're not going to do this" (Ibid., 6). These are moments where sex and sexuality becomes connected to understandings about modernity and respecting women's rights. Canadian national masculinity is positioned as being progressive and respectful of women in relation to masculinities that devalue women. Thus, when Canadian men buy sex, they are acting in ways incongruent with Canadian values and that reflect qualities of less progressive masculine subjects. Seen in this way, men's "demand" becomes threatening because it is seen as an un-Canadian quality that is taking root in the national community due to immigrants and the values they bring with them.

While throughout *The Natashas* nefarious masculine subjects were primarily Central and Eastern European men who were represented as pimps and criminals, the target shifts in Malarek's testimony for the sex trafficking study. Concerns that initially

developed in response to perceived post-socialist criminality have shifted as they are introduced into the Canadian context. He is very clear that this matter of buying sex is not limited to “sleazy” men, the type of ethnicized and classed masculine subjects we encountered in *The Natashas*. The problem is now “brought home,” the sex buyer can be a regular, married, middle class man:

Remember, the demand is not about sleazy guys who are low-life trailer trash or that sort of thing; these guys who are going out are husbands and professional men who get onto airplanes to do business on behalf of corporations, and then go and abuse women and do things to them that they can not do here without getting into serious trouble (Canada 2006g, 4).

Here, Malarek is describing how Western business men – he identifies men from Canada, the United States, Japan, Israel, France, Germany, and Spain – use the Internet to arrange to purchase sex during their business trips. In the context of his presentation, he appears to be suggesting that the men are arranging meetings with women trafficked from Russia, Ukraine, and former Soviet states (Canada 2006g, 10) and, while it is not clear, these transactions appear to be taking place outside of Canada.

The quote above echoes nationalist sentiments present in *The Natashas*. Malarek is explaining that there are locations outside of Canada (and presumably the Western context) where men can do to women as they please. Malarek is expressing concern that Canadian middle class, married men travel to these locations and act in ways that are not congruent with Canadian values – and perhaps risk bringing something back with them, attitudes or desires that threaten to erupt back at home.

While the purchase of sex is problematized in the dominant narrative on human trafficking ostensibly because it is harmful to women, a closer examination suggests that



it is been defined as a problem because it is seen to be reflective of less progressive forms of masculinity being introduced into the national community, threatening the national imaginary of Canada as a modern and gender egalitarian location. The threat from men's demand is thus two-fold. There is firstly the concern that it encourages the presence of foreign sex workers and criminals, producing anxiety about organized crime, migration, and the presence of the foreign Other. Secondly, that demand for paid sex is a manifestation of un-Canadian cultural characteristics. Thus, the end-demand discourse problematizing commercial sex espoused by Malarek is deeply inflected with nationalist understandings formulated in relation to sex and sexuality.

If concerns surrounding the purchase of sexual services by men in Canada are connected to concerns about the manifestation of un-Canadian attitudes to sex and sexuality within the national community, it is not entirely surprising that Malarek also introduces the concept of internal trafficking, or trafficking within the Canadian context, in his testimony:

When you look at the issue within Canada, the reality, and recognize the reality that we do have a serious problem on the streets in parts of Vancouver, the north end of Winnipeg, Toronto, Edmonton, and wherever, and a lot are trafficked out of Native reserves, this is internal trafficking, which is a significant problem around the world ...We have to deal with that issue as well (Canada 2006g, 8).

Malarek does not offer details about internal trafficking outside of this comment; however, it is of note because as it indicates a shift in discourse that has occurred in the United States as well (See: Brennan 2008). What began for Malarek, in *The Natashas*, as a problem of international trafficking, has arrived in Canada as he observes similar

processes developing in the domestic context. In context of fears about rampant post-socialist criminality and egregious violations of women's rights in Central and Eastern Europe, the positioning of the ethical national, masculine subject in *The Natashas* relied on the ethnosexualization of post-socialist female and male subjects. A similar dynamic appears to be emerging within Malarek's testimony regarding the Canadian context. Similar concerns about threats to the Canadian nation in terms of criminality (organized crime or immigration) or manifestation of values deemed to be antithetical to Canadian values (those that devalue women) have attached themselves to the sex purchaser, who could be any man. In a similar manner as well, Indigenous women are being positioned problematically as vulnerable and victimized (see Hunt 2013; Sikka 2009 for the dominant narrative). The figure of the sex purchaser, possessor of an unprogressive, potentially misogynist masculinity similar to the post-socialist masculine subject, is beginning to take shape as an internal threat to women's rights. It seems, then, that fears about foreign criminality and sexual violence that emerged within the international context have become linked to "internal trafficking" and the figure of the sex purchaser in the Canadian context.

## **Conclusion**

Victor Malarek's *The Natashas*, a book that has been influential in shaping discourses on sex trafficking in Canada relays specific understandings related to gender, nation, and sexuality. Malarek's emphasis on protecting women lends his text the semblance of progressiveness that may account for some of its popular and political appeal. He conveys notions of a tough yet protective ethical masculinity aligned with the

state to protect vulnerable women. While Malarek has styled himself as a defender of women's rights, a closer look at the analysis he presents reveals it to be a vehicle for anti-immigrant hostility and the defense of heteronormative institutions and ideas.

Given that *The Natashas* is not defensible as social scientific research, questions remain about considerable interest this work held for policy makers. While the motivations of individual parliamentarians employing Malarek's work are unknown, the narrative that emerged in government discourses asserted a version of Canadian national identity that was forceful and courageous yet benevolent and, by linking protecting women to immigration and crime control measures, justified expanding law enforcement and border control powers. Malarek appeared as a Canadian white knight within *The Natashas*, and the positions parliamentarians adopted link to a similar impulse: the importance of Canadian values in saving victims of sex trafficking.

I have shown how notions of "good" men and "bad" sex in narratives of sex trafficking operating in Canada have a basis in Canadian nationalism and notions of civilizational superiority. Malarek's strong anti-immigrant position was formulated through normative understandings of sex and sexuality that are anti-feminist in their denial of women's sexual autonomy and subjectivity. The sexual conduct of women and, interestingly, men, was a central concern in the stabilization of Canadian borders as well as the boundaries of the nation.

Notions of what constitutes gender equality within Malarek's writing and speeches are linked with individualized violence against women – here understood as prostitution and sex trafficking – and mapped onto geopolitical concerns. Thus the problem of sex trafficking becomes related to matters such as immigration and its attendant threats.

There is the concern that prostitution encourages the presence of foreign sex workers and criminals and that paid sex itself – seen as contrary to the dignity of women - is a manifestation of un-Canadian cultural characteristics.

There is something about sexuality, Mariana Valverde observes, that makes it “a kind of conduit for a whole series of anxieties, fears, and doubts” (1987, 29), ones that become referents for concerns about the nation and national belonging (see Luibhéid 2002). In alluding to a mythological Canadian past, Canadian values, and traditional gender order – expressed through Malarek’s support for policies geared toward curtailing migration, criminalizing trafficking and the purchase of sexual services – are presented as a salve to quell anxieties and uncertainty.

## **Chapter 5: From “Romanian Strippers” to Sex Slaves: Post-socialist Sex Trafficking and the Spectre of the White Slave**

### **Introduction**

Chapters 5 and 6 explore debates in the House of Commons and Senate that involved the post-socialist migrant exotic dancer. This chapter describes how Victor Malarek’s writing in *The Natashas*, a W-Five documentary of his creation about the work permit for foreign exotic dancers, and his testimony during the sex trafficking study shaped and redefined the narrative on sex trafficking in Canadian government discourse. When the matter of foreign exotic dancers first appeared in the House of Commons in November 2004 during the Sgro scandal, post-socialist migrant exotic dancers were positioned ungenerously as illegitimate economic migrants. Yet, in debate on the human trafficking law that took place shortly after the Sgro scandal in 2005, a reconceptualization is evident: the sexual slavery of post-socialist women emerged as a central conceptual frame through which policy makers conceptualized human trafficking in Canada. The legislative summary addressing the work permit for foreign exotic dancers identifies a similar shift: when “far greater numbers [of exotic dancers] were arriving from Eastern Europe, concerns about human trafficking began to emerge.” (Canada 2007b, 5). This chapter describes this discursive shift and discusses the positioning of post-socialist space in government discourse, which mirrors the linkage made between post-socialism and abjection found in both the academic literature and Malarek’s *The Natashas*.

This study finds that in *The Natashas*, Victor Malarek constructed a contemporary white slave figure in the sex trafficked “Natasha” and proposes that the presence of the Natasha discourse in Canada is related to its ability to enliven and resuscitate this dated yet emotionally gripping narrative of white slavery. The Natasha figure appears in Canadian government discourse as a contemporary victim of white slavery specifically because her race contributed to concerns about her sexual violation and her positioning as a legitimate victim. Malarek’s work is compelling because it relies on meanings associated with the ethnosexualization of post-socialist female subjects as particularly vulnerable and innocent *white* women, understandings that were reflected the debate in Parliament where the nineteenth-century concept of white slavery appeared a number of times.

This and the following chapter seek also to highlight expressions of whiteness in discourses on sex trafficking and suggest that human trafficking policies and politics in Canada serve to protect the whiteness of the Canadian nation rather than to protect the individuals who are labouring under conditions of force and coercion (see discussion on Whiteness and Neoliberal Capitalism in Chapter 1). Seen ambiguously as either undesirable immigrants or victims of sex trafficking, post-socialist exotic dancers were positioned outside of the normative structures of the economy and society and legislation was proposed – which was ultimately successful – that would prevent them from migrating to Canada. Parliamentarians debating the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation (Bill C-57) did hear alternatives to the VAW perspective and attempts situate exotic dancers within the legitimate economy through a labour framework

(Canada 2008, 11).<sup>83</sup> Ultimately, however, this alternative understanding remained marginal in relation to the perspective that developed during 2005, which saw them as victims of sexual exploitation.

### **Timing and Trajectory of Debates**

Post-socialist foreign exotic dancers were drawn into various political and policy discussions during the years of 2004 – 2011. There was a significant amount of activity directed toward human trafficking and prostitution during this time period. John A. Ferguson (2012) explains that the image of the vulnerable woman trafficked into prostitution had been embraced by juridical actors within Canada by the early 2000s<sup>84</sup> and numerous activities flowed from this: in 2004, one of the earliest conferences on international trafficking, the Forum on Human Trafficking, was held in Ottawa; in 2005, Canada's first domestic human trafficking law, discussed herein, was introduced and passed (Bill C-49); and the Subcommittee on Solicitation Law Review Committee issued its much anticipated final report in December 2006 called *The Challenge of Change*, the result of nearly three years of study on prostitution law reform.

Discussions involving post-socialist migrant exotic dancers occurred largely between the years of 2004 – 2007, the period explored in greatest detail in this dissertation. In this chapter, I discuss four separate matters: 1) the Sgro scandal; 2) Canada's domestic human trafficking law (Bill C-49); 3) the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's sex trafficking study; and 4) Private Members Motion M-153 to

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<sup>83</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10143 (Ms. Libby Davies, NDP MP).

<sup>84</sup> John A. Ferguson, "International Human Trafficking in Canada: Why so Few Prosecutions?" (PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2012), 153.

condemn the international sex trafficking of girls and women.<sup>85</sup> The Sgro scandal took place during 2004 – 2005 and was the earliest discussion post-socialist migrant exotic dancers were involved in. This matter concerned Judy Sgro’s ethical conduct that happened to involve a former Romanian exotic dancer and the legitimacy of granting temporary work permits to foreign exotic dancers.

The Sgro scandal resulted in high levels of scrutiny being directed toward the issue of migrant exotic dancers. The scandal subsided as Canada’s human trafficking law (Bill C-49) was introduced in May 2005 and post-socialist exotic dancers were taken-up in these debates. Bill C-49 was an amendment to the Criminal Code that, once passed, entered domestic human trafficking offenses into criminal law. The only human trafficking offence existing prior to 2005 was contained in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). It states “no person shall knowingly organize the coming into Canada of one or more persons by means of abduction, fraud, deception or use or threat of force or coercion.”<sup>86</sup> The 2005 amendment, unlike the IRPA, does not necessitate that an international border be crossed to trigger a trafficking offence, and criminalizes “every person who recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation.”<sup>87</sup> This change meant that human trafficking within Canadian borders (i.e. between cities or provinces) was a criminal offence.

Despite being a law concerning domestic rather than international trafficking, post-

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<sup>85</sup> A detailed overview of the different debates examined in this and the following chapter can be found in Chapter 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, S.C. 2001, c. 27, s. 118(1)*.

<sup>87</sup> *Criminal Code, R.S.C 1985, c. C-46, s. 279.01(1)*.



socialist exotic dancers were a preoccupation in debate in both Parliament and the Senate. In this chapter, I will show that initial concerns surrounding Romanian foreign exotic dancers in the Sgro scandal evolved into concerns about post-socialist sex trafficking more broadly that were used to justify a legislative response. Following Bill C-49, post-socialist exotic dancers reappeared in the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women's sex trafficking study of 2006. Having identified human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, as a pressing international and domestic issue, the Committee tasked itself with studying sex trafficking in Canada. A relatively small undertaking, the study commenced in 2006, heard evidence from forty-two witnesses, and delivered their final report in February 2007. Lastly, Private Members Motion M-153 was brought forward by Conservative MP Joy Smith and Bloc Québécois MP Maria Mourani and demanded that the Government of Canada condemn the international trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation and to adopt a comprehensive strategy to combat trafficking in persons (herein the "motion to condemn international sex trafficking"). It was debated twice, once on December 8, 2006 and again on February 22, 2007, and was adopted during session on February 22, 2007.

The remaining policy debate examined in this dissertation is that on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation of 2007 (Bill C-57). Bill C-57 was a proposed amendment to the IRPA that would grant immigration officials the right to deny otherwise qualified applicants a visa if it was suspected that applicant would be abused in their employment. According to the Government of Canada, this legislation flowed from the 2005 human trafficking law (Bill C-49), the findings of the sex trafficking study, and the Government's overall efforts to address trafficking in persons (Canada 2007b). Bill

C-57 will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### **“Queue Jumpers” and Undesirable Migrants: Contempt and Hostility During the Sgro Scandal**

The central question that emerged during the Sgro scandal was the legitimacy of the temporary foreign worker program that permitted foreign women to obtain visas to work as exotic dancers. Surprisingly, given that post-socialist migrant exotic dancers were later positioned as vulnerable and exploited women, the very first comment uttered in the discussion likened foreign exotic dancers to economic asylum seekers. MP Diane Ablonczy opened the discussion with a provocation, “the hot question for economic asylum seekers is, how can I volunteer for [Judy Sgro],”<sup>88</sup> implying the former dancer under discussion was an economic asylum seeker who unfairly benefitted from volunteering on Judy Sgro’s electoral campaign. Sgro, at the time, was the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Concerns about the “exotic dancer visa” – as it became erroneously known in Parliament – were a recurring theme until November 2005, although the substantive discussion subsided by March 2005. This debate unfolded largely before Canada’s human trafficking law (Bill C-49) was introduced in Parliament in May 2005, and foreign exotic dancers were then taken up into those debates. Human trafficking appears to have been a priority area for Paul Martin’s Liberal government at this time. In his 2004 Throne Speech and during a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 24<sup>th</sup> of the same year, Martin noted that trafficking in persons was a concern for the Government of Canada as well as the international community. Later, during 2007 and

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<sup>88</sup>Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (15 November 2004), p. 1328 (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy, CPC MP).

2008, Canada's obligations under the U.N. Protocol were invoked to justify legislation to deny work permits to foreign exotic dancers because of concerns over human trafficking<sup>89</sup> as well as concern about Canada's international reputation. MP Colin Carrie remarked how "this [legislation] is about how Canada is seen in the world."<sup>90</sup>

The concerns expressed by parliamentarians in the initial discussions during 2004 about the temporary work permit involved Romanian exotic dancers specifically.<sup>91</sup> Much of the concern revolved around the idea that "strippers" were given undeserving preferential treatment over other more qualified and suitable migrants. Conservative Leader MP Stephen Harper commented that, "in today's paper is a letter about a doctor who was refused entry into Canada ... When strippers are jumping the queue and doctors cannot get in, how does the Prime Minister explain to Canadians and to hundreds of thousands in the immigration line that the system is fair."<sup>92</sup> Conservative MP Nina Grewal also made a number of similar comments. She remarked how "legitimate applicants for funerals, marriages, and even life-saving transplants are declined. Doctors drive cabs, engineers wash windows and nurses sit at home while strippers get fast-tracked"<sup>93</sup> and also noted that someone with a PhD had to wait for four years while "a stripper who worked on the minister's campaign has jumped the queue while there is a backlog of 700,000 applicants who follow the rules."<sup>94</sup>

While this commentary was strongest from the Conservatives who formed the opposition, it was not limited only to Conservative members. Bloc Québécois MP Carole

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<sup>89</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10178 (Colin Carrie, CPC MP).

<sup>90</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10180 (Colin Carrie, CPC MP).

<sup>91</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (23 November 2004), p. 1733 (Mr. Bill Siksay, NDP MP); (December 3, 2004), p. 2257 (Mr. Maurice Vellacott, CPC MP).

<sup>92</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (29 November 2004), p. 2027 (Mr. Stephen Harper, CPC MP).

<sup>93</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (30 November 2004), p. 2107 (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP).

<sup>94</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (30 November 2004), p. 2108 (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP).

Lavalée also called into question the supposed preferential treatment received by foreign exotic dancers, inquiring how the “minister justif[ies] her haste to satisfy the demand of this industry and refuse to give priority to much more urgent matters?”<sup>95</sup> While the Conservatives appeared to be motivated to embarrass the Liberals by making them appear incompetent, this effort nevertheless turned on disparaging a specifically gendered and ethnicized category of migrant worker, the Romanian stripper.

Comments made by two parliamentarians in particular point to latent issues that may have underpinned this hostility; exotic dancers were not undesirable immigrants only because they were unqualified in relation to others, but specifically because they were seen as less worthy than other women migrants:

Every year thousands of women apply to come to Canada to escape persecution. The line is long but they patiently wait. Women from around the world are trying to escape war, famine and disease but they must wait in line while exotic dancers get preferential treatment by the minister. Why do some women get special treatment while the rest are treated so unfairly (Mrs. Carol Skelton, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 November 2004, 1971)?

There is a bottleneck of 700,000 applicants waiting to enter the country, among them many women with professional qualifications and experience. The immigration minister has insulted these women by dishing out special favours to strippers and campaign workers (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 1 December 2004, 2132).

Mr. Speaker, while the immigration minister has been preoccupied with strippers, the waiting period for family reunification class has increased to over fifty-three months. The arbitrary rejection of spouses applying to join husbands or wives in Canada has been undermining families (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 7 December 2004, 2387).

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<sup>95</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 November 2004), p. 1972 (Mrs. Carole Lavalée, BQ MP).

Here, exotic dancers are positioned as less worthy than women escaping persecution and other dangerous conditions, qualified or educated women, as well as wives or family members, and also as underhanded in some manner under the pretext that they did not wait patiently to come to Canada, carrying gendered connotations about respectable feminine behaviour. These comments suggest that the lack of generosity accorded foreign exotic dancers was informed by their stigmatization as disreputable or “bad” women that attenuated anti-immigrant discourses by naturalizing the negative response to the arrival of foreign dancers; strippers are obviously less worthy and deserving than other women who wait patiently for their turn to come to Canada.

There were also instances where anti-immigrant discourses became interwoven with discourses of women’s vulnerability to exploitation, such as in the following exchange:

Hon. Helena Guergis: The immigration minister [Judy Sgro] says on one hand that the stripper program is necessary to protect women, yet on the other hand she says the program is exploiting women and should be stopped. Which is it?

Hon. Judy Sgro: Let me say that when it comes to standing up for women’s rights, we on this side of the House are going to make sure that women’s rights are front and centre. When we talk about issues of exploitation of women or anything to do with threats against women, we are going to be standing up for them.

Hon. Helena Guergis: Mr. Speaker, my question is really very simple. I would appreciate it if the minister would stop dancing around the subject. Why are legitimate claimants left waiting in line while the minister allows queue jumping under a program that she says she does not support (Hon. Helena Guergis, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 November 2004, 1970)?

In the first two statements, the visa for foreign exotic dancers is discussed from the violence against women (VAW) paradigm, naming women's rights and exotic dancers' vulnerability to exploitation. As discussed in Chapter 1, I employ the VAW paradigm to describe anti-prostitution, anti-trafficking discourses in the government context as this is the language of sex trafficking that has evolved through feminist activism in international legal and policy-making spheres. However, in the last statement, Guergis queries Sgro about immigration, and reframes the issue from one that saw foreign exotic dancers as potential victims to illegitimate queue jumpers. A similar dynamic can be seen in commentary from Lavalée as well:

We were quite surprised to say the least to learn of the existence of an immigration program that gives exotic dancers priority entry into Canada.

How does the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration justify the existence of such a program, which provides workers to an industry that blatantly exploits women (Mrs. Carole Lavalée, BQ MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 November 2004, 1972)?

The first part of Lavalée's statement is indeed ambiguous, however the language "priority entry" takes on anti-immigrant connotations in the context of this debate as the discussion centred on the unjustified prioritizing of exotic dancers' entry into Canada. Thus, this statement contains a degree of hostility toward foreign exotic dancers as undesirable immigrants yet also frames the issue through the VAW paradigm by invoking concerns about women's exploitation. These examples suggest caution in attributing explanatory power to feminist perspectives in government discourse, as feminist language may be

appropriated and used in non-feminist ways as a vehicle for exclusions and anti-immigrant hostility.

It was three weeks into the Sgro scandal before any linkages to human trafficking began to emerge, suggesting there was uncertainty surrounding the question of whether foreign exotic dancers were exploited women or queue-jumping economic migrants. MP James Lunney notes that the RCMP documented how 600 women were lured into the sex trade in Canada each year, and “against this dismal backdrop, [Judy Sgro] has been providing incentives to foreign women to apply as exotic dancers, leaving them extremely vulnerable to further exploitation.”<sup>96</sup> While Lunney is linking the work permit to human trafficking, he falls short of positioning foreign dancers as already victims of trafficking; rather he is suggesting that the work permit leaves women vulnerable to trafficking, a serious global problem associated with sex work.

Likewise it was two weeks before any mention of organized crime was made, a rather long time considering the centrality of organized crime to the dominant trafficking narrative and within the debates on the human trafficking law. MP Paule Brunelle queried Judy Sgro on how could she, “herself a woman, show such lack of judgement and critical sense by issuing permits to women, so that they could work in an environment where women are all too often dominated and exploited, an environment where organized crime is thriving?”<sup>97</sup> While there were concerns about women’s harm, it is not clear that parliamentarians involved in these debates conceptualized foreign exotic dancers as victims of human trafficking.

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<sup>96</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (7 December 2004), p. 2389 (Mr. James Lunney, CPC MP).

<sup>97</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (30 November 2004), p. 2111 (Ms. Paule Brunelle, BQ MP).

The matter of work permits for foreign exotic dancers was not definitively conceptualized as a matter of sex trafficking until March 7, 2005, a date following the broadcast of a documentary on the temporary work permit by Victor Malarek on the television program W-Five on March 5, 2005. In the documentary, entitled “The Naked Truth,” Malarek framed the work permit issue in a manner mirroring the sensationalism found in the *The Natashas*. This program is of particular importance because of references to it made in Parliament and the high profile participants it included: Conservative Leader Stephen Harper, Immigration Minister Joe Volpe, Canadian diplomat Joe Bisset, not to mention Malarek himself.

It was after the W-Five broadcast that a shift occurred and the VAW framing of foreign exotic dancers as trafficked women took shape in parliamentary discussion. Given the influence of Malarek’s perspectives on sex trafficking in the government context, it perhaps is not entirely unexpected that, after the broadcast of his documentary, foreign exotic dancers became linked with human trafficking and accusations of human trafficking began to be made against the government:

The immigration minister told the House, “We looked at whether we wanted to continue to provide labour market opinion on strippers and the answer was clearly no”... W-Five has exposed the government as untrustworthy because officials have warned for years that bringing in strippers amounts to trafficking in vulnerable young women. Why is the Canadian government still secretly complicit in the exploitation of women (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 7 March 2005, 4039)?



Ablonczy's comment points to a significant reorientation from her earlier statement about economic asylum seekers, suggesting that Malarek's perspectives played a role in reframing the issue of foreign exotic dancers for Members of Parliament.

In his documentary, Malarek observed that dancers come both from Romania and Mexico and a Mexican former exotic dancer named Anna joined him on the program. The narrative he relayed emphasized the woman's victimization; when Malarek asked Anna if she had the feeling that some of the dancers did not want to be in her previous line of work, she replied "yes, you look at their eyes, they were scared. Probably something how I looked, scared" (Malarek 2005, n.p.). Later Anna explained how "agents bring the girls and they exploit them. It's slavery" (Ibid.).

While Anna, a Mexican woman, was featured on the program, Bisset likened the work permit for foreign exotic dancers to "white slavery" and linked it to women from Eastern Europe, not only Romania (Malarek 2005). Despite the presence of a Latina woman the narrative turned to victimized white European femininity, which carried racist undertones naturalizing the violence against racialized and non-European women. Bisset stated:

They're facilitating white slavery ... In most countries, these girls from Eastern Europe and elsewhere are smuggled into the country illicitly by false visas or across borders. In Canada, they don't have to do it because our government is facilitating the movement of these girls (Malarek 2005, n.p.).

Bisset's exchange with Malarek reinforces the connection between the temporary work permit for exotic dancers and trafficking from post-socialist Europe:

Bisset: If you apply for your grandmother from most countries around the world to visit, the chances of her getting a visitor visa

are almost nil. But if you're a young girl being exploited out of Romania, when you get here, it's a different story.

Malarek: So what you're saying is if I wanted my grandmother to come from Ukraine, I couldn't get her in here, but boy if I wanted a stripper from Ukraine?

Bisset: Absolutely (Malarek 2005, n.p.).

The exchange above foments a linkage between white slavery, human trafficking, and post-socialist Europe mirroring the Natasha discourse.

While media reports previously noted concerns about the mistreatment of foreign exotic dancers from post-socialist countries for a number of years,<sup>98</sup> this understanding did not emerge in government discourse regarding Romanian foreign exotic dancers until Malarek's documentary. This documentary then appears to have played a role in framing the issue of temporary work permits to one of human trafficking, and of linking discourses circulating within Canada to the international Natasha discourse:

The investigative news program W-Five has exposed the Liberals' dirty little secret: they continue to be complicit in the trafficking of young women ... [The Prime Minister's] promise to end the stripper program hid the truth: the back door is still wide open ... Today, on International Women's Day, I call on colleagues on the Liberal benches over there to demand a stop to this continuing exploitation of women (Mrs. Diane Ablonczy, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 7 March 2005, 4108).

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<sup>98</sup> Pat Conroy, "11 Soviet 'Models' Arrested for Stripping Without Visas," *Toronto Star*, April 1, 1991; Mike Trickey, "Closing the Curtain on Russian Strippers," *The Gazette*, June 28, 1995; Grant LaFleche, "2 Deportees in Sex Slave Trade: Hungarians Among 17 Dancers Arrested," *The National Post*, March 11, 2000.

Ablonczy's shift in perspective from seeing foreign exotic dancers as economic asylum seekers to trafficked women is evident again. Interestingly, while she is taking a VAW perspective, anti-immigrant discourses are still present. It is unclear whether the objective behind ending the "stripper program" is to protect women or to stop the flow of undesirable migrants entering Canada. References to "back door" suggest something underhanded or illegitimate and, in the context of the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation, the temporary work permit for exotic dancers was elsewhere called a "loophole,"<sup>99</sup> carrying similar connotations.

The queue-jumping discourse circulated without challenge in the governmental debate, disparaging the Romanian stripper as an undesirable migrant while claiming to uphold the legitimacy of the Canadian immigration system and to protect women. The VAW paradigm that saw the exotic dancers as exploited or trafficked women was also present, yet only developed as the dominant understanding after a W-Five documentary linking the temporary work permit for foreign exotic dancers to white slavery, human trafficking, and post-socialist Europe.

### **"Dancing Slaves": Post-socialist Sex Trafficking and White Slavery**

During the Sgro scandal, foreign exotic dancers were cast ungenerously as illegitimate economic migrants until they were repositioned as victims of trafficking following Malarek's W-Five documentary. This repositioning largely foreclosed questions about the dancers' illegitimacy by the time the debate on the human trafficking law (Bill C-49) was underway; however lingering questions surrounding their culpability

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<sup>99</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10174 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP).

persisted despite the oftentimes sensationalistic appeals to fears about exotic dancers being “sex slaves.” In his speech on the human trafficking law, Art Hanger commented:

... If [the Immigration Department] is willing to open the doors to strippers and prostitutes of various kinds and claim what they do to be a legitimate form of work, then it is a party to what happens afterwards. I find that appalling ... I might also point out that ministers of the past here, ministers of the Crown, have even gone to bat for this so-called legitimate occupation (Mr. Art Hanger, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 27 September 2005, 8113).

Hanger’s statement was one of the few disparaging comments lobbed toward post-socialist exotic dancers beyond 2004. By the time post-socialist exotic dancers had entered discussions on the human trafficking law, their position as victims of sex trafficking was largely unambiguous. Yet, as I will show later in this chapter, concerns about criminality and post-socialism haunted the entirety of the discussions surrounding post-socialist sex trafficking.

As the matter of foreign exotic dancers became linked to the international Natasha discourse, the foreign exotic dancer became a referent for the problem of post-socialist sex trafficking more broadly. While the representation of foreign exotic dancers as trafficked women first developed during the Sgro scandal, encouraged by the W-Five documentary, the figure of the post-socialist victim of sex trafficking concretized during debate on Canada’s domestic human trafficking law in 2005 (Bill C-49). As described in this chapter, the human trafficking law of 2005 created an offense that did “not need movement across an international border to be triggered” (Canada 2005, 7). That is, domestic human trafficking – human trafficking within Canadian borders – was

criminalized for the first time. It was during debate on this law that the Romanian exotic dancer became understood as a specific expression of a larger problem, that of post-socialist sex trafficking.

MP Pat Martin used inflammatory language to foment fears about the sexual slavery of Eastern European women in Toronto strip clubs during debate on the human trafficking law (Bill C-49). He accused the government of being involved in “human trafficking and exploitation and sex slavery of women from East European countries” and called the stripper program a “special deal to supply the pornography and sex trade with fresh, young, vulnerable women from desperate circumstances.”<sup>100</sup> The narrative Martin conveyed mirrors the international Natasha discourse:

What would be the application of Bill C-49 in a situation where the Government of Canada put immigration workers over in Romania and Budapest to seduce young women to come to Canada under the exotic dancer’s visa and then to have these women imported by immigration lawyers in Toronto who own the strip clubs and have these women by the hundreds fall into what can only be categorized as sex slavery and human bondage (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 27 September 2005, 8104).

Martin’s comments suggest that what began as concern centering on Romania during the Sgro scandal later expanded to include Budapest and Eastern Europe during debate on the human trafficking law. Post-socialist sex trafficking emerged as a central preoccupation and was linked to white slavery in several instances in the House of Commons. Following Martin’s comments above, MP Lynne Yelich voiced concerns about legalizing prostitution by drawing attention to a paper by radical feminist theorist Donna Hughes:

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<sup>100</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (27 September 2005), p. 8106 (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP).

As [Donna Hughes] researched women's rights, she consulted with many governments. In a journal she wrote a paper called 'The Natasha Trade - The Transnational Shadow Market of Trafficking in Women.' In this paper she concluded that: legalization of prostitution is sometimes thought to be a solution to trafficking in women, but evidence seems to show that legalized sex industries actually result in increased trafficking to meet the demand for women to be used in the legal sex industries. Increased activity of organized crime networks also accompanies increases in trafficking (Mrs. Lynne Yelich, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 8029).

The paper Yelich is referring to focuses on women from former Soviet republics, particularly Ukraine and Russia (see Hughes 2000).

After Yelich's speech, MP Guy André immediately voiced his disagreement with the conclusions she had drawn, stating that he does "not necessarily believe that legalizing prostitution or creating a framework for it would increase white slavery and sexual exploitation."<sup>101</sup> André appears to be suggesting that he himself understands the Natasha trade as related to or reflective of white slavery. Shortly after, another member continues with the discussion on decriminalizing prostitution, and refers explicitly to post-socialist sex trafficking: "we must be careful when we talk about decriminalizing prostitution or drugs ... After the fall of the Soviet Union, for example, sex industry dealers engaged in the serious trafficking of women and girls from Russia and Poland to Germany and Western Europe."<sup>102</sup> The spectre of the white slave arises alongside debate on foreign exotic dancers and the Natasha discourse.

References to white slavery also emerge elsewhere in the debate. After quoting from Malarek's *The Natashas* to support the use of the "full force of the law"<sup>103</sup> to

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<sup>101</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p.8029 (Mr. Guy André, BQ MP).

<sup>102</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 8035 (Ms. Christiane Gagnon, BQ MP).

<sup>103</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7990 (Mr. Vic Toews, CPC MP).

combat trafficking, MP Vic Toews explained that “the preconceived idea people have of trafficking in persons is, more often than not, associated with what used to be called, inappropriately to my mind, white slavery.”<sup>104</sup> He goes on to present examples of trafficking that he linked to the post-socialist context and to the work permit for foreign exotic dancers:

To take a familiar example: Young women from the former Soviet republics are approached by fake talent or modelling agencies and leap at the chance for a lucrative career in fashion. Others are approached by agencies claiming to be recruiting au pairs ... They end up in the clutches of criminal organizations that take away their passports and have well organized rings forcing them into strip clubs or prostitution.

In the spring there was the whole debate on the lack of certain qualified labourers, namely nude dancers. To our great astonishment we learned, here in the House of Commons, that bars were importing dancers because there was a lack of this type of worker and that for the most part, these dancers were probably being handed over to organized crime (Mr. Vic Toews, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 7994).

In Toews’s speech it is possible to discern a connection between the nineteenth century concept of white slavery, post-socialist sex trafficking, and the temporary work permit for exotic dancers, which are elements of the Natasha discourse.

Post-socialist sex trafficking was likewise a concern in the Senate, where it was the only form of human trafficking discussed during debate on Bill C-49 despite being an example of international rather than domestic human trafficking that was the focus of the law. Senator Andreychuk discussed Professor Leslie Ann Jeffrey’s critical research (see Jeffrey 2005) on human trafficking to provide context and justify the need for the

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<sup>104</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7994 (Mr. Vic Toews, CPC MP).

legislation. Professor Jeffrey's research was the only instance of research framing sex work as labour presented in the context of Senate debate. However, Andreychuk ultimately turned not to empirical research but to Victor Malarek's "compelling" book. She explained how Malarek "delv[ed] into the buying and selling of human flesh for the worldwide sex industry."<sup>105</sup> She cited text from his book to provide a framework for her speech:

To me, 'The Natashas' is about a generation of lost girls. Virtually every city, town and village in Eastern and Central Europe has seen some of its girls and women disappear. Incredibly, they weren't lost to illness or war or to the tragedy of famine or natural disaster. On the contrary, they have become expendable pawns in the burgeoning business of money, lust, and sex (Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk, *Senate Debates*. Canada, 1 November 2005, 2038).

After this introduction, she went on to provide a synopsis of the text itself, which reproduced the Natasha discourse and relays fears of post-socialist sex trafficking to a greater extent than appeared in the House of Commons.

[Malarek] documents the past decade of the most vulnerable from Central and Eastern Europe. The former Soviet Union and its satellite republics created a closed society ...

With many [young women] unemployed, they saw their hope for survival and that of their families in the escape to Western Europe, Turkey, Israel, the United States and Canada. In fact, these women became the most sought-after women for the sex trade around the world.

Mr. Malarek's chapters on the agony of these young women are heartbreaking. Their distrust of authority, having grown up under

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<sup>105</sup> Canada, *Senate Debates* (1 November 2005), p. 2037 (Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk).



a repressive regime, and their inability or lack of awareness to deal with this new competitive and open society is explained fully ... They are afraid of testifying against their captors. They have few language skills. They have distrust of authority ... This is the seamy side of Western societies who now absorb thousands of Central and Eastern European women into the sex trade (Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk, *Senate Debates*. Canada, 1 November 2005, 2038).

This lengthy quote illustrates the understanding that formed among policymakers as well as Malarek's role in shaping this understanding. The representation of post-socialist femininity conveyed by Andreychuk is one that is destitute, naïve, and easily lured into the sex sector. Of note in her speech is the description of post-socialist women as unable or unaware of how to adapt to a democratic regime and having an unsophisticated fear and mistrust of authority, reflecting the “lag” discourse observed by Koobak and Marling (2014). While the attention Senator Andreychuk gave to Malarek's work was longest and most detailed, the Natasha discourse was utilized elsewhere to conceptualize human trafficking and the situation of Romanian, Eastern and Central European exotic dancers.

During another session of Senate where Bill C-49 was being debated, Senator Joyal described how he thought “the infamous program of the exotic dancers was a shame on Canada's reputation.”<sup>106</sup> He said, “it [was] one of those horrendous initiatives whereby to meet the need of ‘labour markets,’ Canada was in fact complicit in the sex trade.”<sup>107</sup> While he did not refer to Romanian exotic dancers specifically, his comments mirror the debate that centred on Romanian exotic dancers and “labour market needs” in the House of Commons.<sup>108</sup> Senator Gerard Phalen followed his comments by recounting a

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<sup>106</sup> Canada, *Senate Debates* (25 October 2005), p.1981 (Hon. Serge Joyal).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> See: Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 November 2004), p. 1972 (Hon. Judy Sgro, Lib. MP); (31 October 2005), p. 9251 (Belinda Stronach, Lib. MP).

story from *Maclean's* magazine (see McClelland 2001) describing the sex trafficking of a young woman from Budapest to Toronto to work as an exotic dancer. While the article included examples of the trafficking of Asian women in addition to Eastern European women trafficked as exotic dancers on temporary foreign work permits, the example he selected is that of a post-socialist woman. The woman was misled about a job as a nanny and forced to work at a strip club, her travel documents and wages were withheld, and she was kept under surveillance and lived in a hotel room along with other Eastern European dancers.<sup>109</sup> The understanding that developed through this discussion, which was used to justify the need for a law against domestic human trafficking, was that the temporary work permit facilitated post-socialist sex trafficking.

The Senate Standing Committee on Legislative and Constitutional Affairs later studied the human trafficking law in November 2005, and the exotic dancer visa and sex trafficking were significant concerns for Senators and Members of Parliament. Senator Joyal asked MP Irwin Cotler, Liberal Minister of Justice and Attorney General who introduced the law in Parliament, what “your department has done to answer the needs of all those women lured to Canada through the exotic dancer programs who have found themselves caught up in the sex trade business in Canada against their will?”(Canada 2005a, 51). Cotler explained:

Close to 2,000 women were lured to Canada under that program. In 2003, 661 came from an East European country. Since the so-called exotic dancer program has existed, more than 1,000 women have been attracted to Canada, most often under the false pretense that they would be working in the hotel or tourism industry. Once they arrived, they would have had to perform. Police reports state

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<sup>109</sup> Canada, *Senate Debates* (25 October 2005), p. 1982 (Hon. Gerard Phalen, Lib.).

that most of them end up being forced to work in the sex trade and fall under the control of organized crime (Canada 2005a, 52).

Joyal then proceeded to analogize the redress owed to foreign exotic dancers to compensation Canada owes Indigenous victims of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools:

I understand that the program has been abolished, but most of those women are still here and we do not know what has happened to them. We do not know what protection we can afford them through a government responsibility ... I do not want to make any demagogic parallel, but the Prime Minister has announced compensation for the residents of residential schools. The program was created with all good intentions but it caused a problem. What will government do to address the problems that it created (Canada 2005a, 53)?

The troubling presence of an analogy made between victimized white women and victims of colonial violence that has had devastating effects on Indigenous persons suggests that the violation of white feminine bodies elicited high levels of concern from policymakers and was a harm worthy of notice and redress.

While concern centred on Romanian exotic dancers during the Sgro scandal, by the time the legislation to protect foreign workers was introduced into the House of Commons, the concern had expanded to include Romanian as well as other Eastern European women who were cast as victims of sex trafficking – and not only exotic dancers but other sex workers. What began as a matter related to Romanian exotic dancers evolved into a narrative conforming closely to the Natasha discourse, that of post-socialist women lured and forced to work as “sex slaves.”

## **Positioning the Post-socialist in the Canadian Governmental Context**

While post-socialist exotic dancers were not the only concern in the debate over the human trafficking law, they were seen to represent a dimension of post-socialist sex trafficking that emerged as a central conceptual frame through which the problem of human trafficking was understood by policymakers. Post-socialist exotic dancers and fears about post-socialist sex trafficking were then drawn into other policy discussions in 2006 and 2007. This section addresses these discussions that occurred after the human trafficking law came into force in November 2005 and analyses how post-socialist female subjects and post-socialist spaces were conceptualized in government discourse. In this section, I explore testimony given during the sex trafficking study of 2006 and, to a lesser extent, engage with debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking (M-153); motion M-153 is explored in greater detail in Chapter 6. The sex trafficking study was an investigation carried out by the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women between October 2006 and February 2007 with a mandate to draw the attention of Parliament and Canadian society to the issue of sex trafficking which they held was responsible for ninety-two percent of all human trafficking (Canada 2007a, 1).

The sex trafficking study and the motion to condemn international sex trafficking are unique in the government debates examined in this study for their strong violence against women (VAW) position on prostitution and the presence of demands to criminalize the purchase of sexual services. It was during 2006 that the idea of criminalizing the purchase of sex appeared and remained central to the Conservative federal government's prostitution reform proposals (see Canada 2014; Smith 2014). In Chapter 2, I made the argument that the pathologization of commercial sex and sex

purchasers were nationalistic expressions based in the rejection of patriarchal values and gender inequality that were seen to be un-Canadian. In the next chapter, I will present a deeper discussion of sexualized nationalism and show how, in demands to criminalize the purchase of sex, there is a paradoxical scrutiny of the sexual behaviour of national male subjects who are likewise imagined as the agents of national progress and modernity (see McClintock 1995, 359). It appears that the VAW framing of prostitution became intertwined with expressions of Canadian nationalism that saw the Canadian state as the civilized protector of vulnerable women. This is a topic I will turn to in Chapter 6.

Some discussion of feminist perspectives on prostitution and sex trafficking in the debates will provide context for this and the upcoming chapter. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women's final report from the sex trafficking study was strongly in support of the VAW paradigm on sex trafficking that incorporates prohibitionist, anti-prostitution perspectives (Canada 2007a). The report advocated that Canada adopt the Swedish policy of criminalizing the purchase of sexual services. The witnesses included many anti-trafficking organizations and activists that are known for their anti-prostitution advocacy in Canada, including Swedish-Canadian lawyer and advocate for the Swedish model Gunilla Ekberg, University of Ottawa Professor Richard Poulin, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Benjamin Perrin, Victor Malarek, and a Montréal-based prohibitionist organization Concertation des Luttes Contre L'Exploitation Sexuelle.

In considering the range of debate and testimony examined in this dissertation and despite the presence of strong prohibitionist voices in some policy debates, it is unclear that policymakers were unanimous in their understandings of prostitution and sex

trafficking, theoretically or in terms of policy approaches. For example, discourses of sex work as labour were heard during debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation in 2007 (Bill C-57);<sup>110</sup> the VAW paradigm was not the only understanding available. Other parliamentarians, however, took vastly differing perspectives. MP Maria Mourani, for example, argued that prostitution is violence against women in debate on Motion M-153<sup>111</sup> in 2006. It is also unclear that policy makers who adhered to a VAW position on prostitution, such as MP Meili Faille, all supported the same policy approaches. In her speech on legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation, Faille was opposed to creating obstacles for women to obtain temporary work permits as she felt this would lead to more trafficking.<sup>112</sup> Further, evidently in the case of Victor Malarek, it is uncertain whether those speaking from the VAW paradigm had any investment in feminist objectives whatsoever.

Having said that, the testimony given during the sex trafficking study and the motion to condemn international sex trafficking strongly favoured the VAW framing of human trafficking, and sex work and trafficking were conflated by witnesses and parliamentarians.<sup>113</sup> Carol Morency, Senior Counsel with the Department of Justice, gave testimony making a separation between prostitution and human trafficking that was quickly challenged by Standing Committee member MP Maria Mourani, who asks:

Do you not think drawing a distinction between human trafficking and prostitution ultimately makes no sense, in a way? Ninety-two percent of victims of human trafficking are used for prostitution ... The average age of people getting into prostitution is 14. Do

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<sup>110</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10143 (Ms. Libby Davies, NDP MP).

<sup>111</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5874 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP).

<sup>112</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10141 (Ms. Meili Faille, BQ MP).

<sup>113</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5874 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP); (22 February 2007), p. 7236 (Mr. Bruce Stanton, CPC MP).

you believe that consent could ever be given under these conditions? I read that ninety-two percent of women who engage in prostitution want to get out of it. Do you not think [making a distinction between prostitution and trafficking] sends a strange message, both nationally and internationally (Mrs. Maria Mourani, Canada 2006a, 12)?

Mourani's perspective above reflects the one taken in the sex trafficking study more broadly.

Gunilla Ekberg (Canada 2006h, 6) and Victor Malarek (Canada 2006g, 5) both linked Canada's exotic dancer visa to human trafficking; post-socialist sex trafficking again appeared as a dimension of human trafficking in Canada. Malarek continued to make the linkage between Romanian foreign exotic dancers and sex trafficking that he began to formulate in 2005. In his testimony during the sex trafficking study, he referred to Romanian exotic dancers as the classic example of trafficking that occurs when sex work is legalized (Canada 2006g, 5). Several years later, this idea remained germane to understandings of human trafficking in Canada. Benjamin Perrin described the temporary work permit for foreign exotic dancers as an avenue that permitted the human trafficking and enslavement of women from Central and Eastern Europe, naming Romanian women specifically (2010, 43-44).

Similar linkages between women from post-socialist countries, work permits for exotic dancers, and human trafficking can be found in the debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking that took place in 2007. This debate appeared as a continuation of discussion on prostitution law reform, conditioned most likely by the Subcommittee on Solicitation Law Review study of the prostitution laws that had begun

work in 2003. In debate on this motion, concerns about legalizing prostitution<sup>114</sup> and nods toward the Swedish model<sup>115</sup> were introduced from time to time; trafficking and prostitution were closely linked – if not conflated – by many parliamentarians.<sup>116</sup> As during the sex trafficking study, Mourani strongly emphasized the connection between prostitution and trafficking, saying “the major issue underlying trafficking is prostitution. That is the basic issue.”<sup>117</sup> Mourani is the only Member of Parliament who I have been able to determine, through her published work, takes perspectives grounded in radical feminist theories of prostitution (See: Mourani 2011). Here also, foreign exotic dancers figured into the discussion as examples of trafficked women and were brought into the debate by MPs Nicole Demers,<sup>118</sup> Ed Fast,<sup>119</sup> and Joy Smith.<sup>120</sup> In her speech in support of the motion, Nicole Demers explained that:

Some [trafficked] women are led to believe that they are being recruited for legitimate employment, such as the case of the dancers in Ontario that we saw last year. These women came here, thinking that they would be able to find legitimate employment, only to find themselves working in strip clubs in abysmal conditions (Ms. Nicole Demers, BQ MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 22 February 2007, 7234).

The issue of migrant exotic dancers being trafficked to Ontario strip clubs that Demers referred to is one that centred on women coming from former socialist Eastern European countries.

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<sup>114</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5872 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).

<sup>115</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5875 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP)

<sup>116</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5874 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP); (22 February 2007), p. 7236 (Mr. Bruce Stanton, CPC MP).

<sup>117</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5874 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP).

<sup>118</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (22 February 2007), p. 7234 (Ms. Nicole Demers, BQ MP).

<sup>119</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (22 February 2007), p. 7231 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP).

<sup>120</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5870 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).



The positioning of post-socialist female subjects in the sex trafficking study mirrors forms of ethnosexualization found in the Natasha discourse. Other witnesses also contributed to this understanding:

[Another case] is that of a woman from Russia who came here under the family reunification program. Her father—at least we assume that he was her father—was here in Canada. As soon as she arrived in Canada, she was offered work in a massage parlour. She is currently working there seven days a week, seventeen hours a day, for the sole purpose of bringing her mother over to Canada (Ms. Diane Matte, Canada 2006e, 8).

Over the last three decades, countries in the southern hemisphere have seen a spectacular rise in prostitution and the trafficking of women and children for purposes of prostitution. And for more than a decade now, that has also been the case in former socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the Balkans (Mr. Richard Poulin, Canada 2006b, 4).

In the comments above, post-socialist women are primarily defined by their position as victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation vis-à-vis men and the societies they live in.

Perhaps not surprisingly given Malarek's involvement in shaping perceptions of trafficking in the government context, another witness read a selection from Malarek's *The Natashas* during her testimony. What this meant was that Victor Malarek gave testimony during the study and had his perspectives included a second time. Irene Sushko of the Canadian Ukrainian Congress relayed an anecdote about Sophia<sup>121</sup> from *The Natashas*, a young woman abducted from Romania. She stated that while the situation described Romania, she knew of a similar situation that happened here in Canada (Canada 2006e, 3). In doing so, Sushko formed a linkage for members of the Standing

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<sup>121</sup> Refer also to page 129 of this study.

Committee between Canada and the international problem of post-socialist sex trafficking:

There were so many young girls in [the apartment]. They were from Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, and Bulgaria. Some were crying. Others looked terrified. We were told not to speak to each other, not to tell each other our names or where we were from. All the time very mean and ugly men came in and dragged girls into the rooms. Sometimes they would rape girls in front of us. They yelled at them, ordered them to move in certain ways, to pretend excitement, to moan. It was sickening (Canada 2006e, 4).

While this example contains explicit descriptions of violence that are not representative of the content nor tone of most witnesses' testimonies, the understanding conveyed in each of these examples is that post-socialist women are often victims of sex trafficking.

Witnesses attributed trafficking to women's pauperization during the transition from socialism to a market economy, linking the women's victimization to experiences of poverty and constraints on choice:

Since the fall of the Berlin wall, thousands of women, who were professionals—occupational therapists, medical secretaries and in all kinds of other occupations—live in poverty with an average of \$30 a month in order to survive, not in a warm country, but in Bulgaria and in Eastern Europe. It's impossible for them to make ends meet, so they can't refuse an offer they get to come to America or to go to Europe. They're thus caught in all kinds of traps that lead to prostitution (Jean Bellefeuille, Canada 2006c, 7).

When I started to look into this issue to write *The Natashas*, what I looked at was the fall of the Iron Curtain and the fall of the Berlin Wall in East Germany. The social safety net in Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, and all of those former Soviet countries is completely shattered; there's nothing left ... What has happened is that alcoholism and family breakdown have just devastated those countries, (Victor Malarek, Canada 2006g, 4).

The problem is very widespread, as it would be from any country that is economically struggling, going through a changeover into a democracy. A lot of Romanian women are trafficked into [Canada]. The RCMP would probably corroborate those statistics. I know of cases of Ukrainian women as well (Irene Soltys, Canada 2006e, 13).

In these examples, each speaker positions post-socialist women as “not-prostitutes” as Victor Malarek did in *The Natashas*, a discursive strategy that closes-off ambiguity about them being “real” or by-choice sex workers. Jean Bellefeuille, representing Comité d’action contre le trafic humain interne et international (CATHII) based in Montréal, suggested that the failed state is responsible for the women’s fall into trafficking and prostitution similar to Victor Malarek above. As in *The Natashas*, Victor Malarek positioned post-socialist women as not-prostitutes by alluding to the devastating conditions in their countries. For Malarek, the post-socialist female subject is a “good” woman in desperate circumstances, a narrative that also appears within the Sex Trafficking testimony.

The first example, however, also places emphasis on post-socialist women being educated and professional. This idea also appears elsewhere in the testimony. Aurélie Lebrun, a researcher also representing CATHII, likewise noted that Russian women are highly educated (Canada 2006c, 7). However, in Bellefeuille’s comment above, despite being highly educated, their poverty and naïveté makes them vulnerable to trickery into prostitution. Even though the women are educated, generally seen as a proxy for agential behaviour or choice, they are somehow also easily duped. Here, it appears that their Easternness, their belonging to post-socialist states, overdetermines how witnesses represented their actions.

There was a limited amount of testimony related to the women's physicality, however it is noteworthy that some testimony did gesture to the women's bodies and sexuality. Lebrun, recounting customers' Internet chat room discussions, reported that Russian women were considered by Canadian men to be exotic (Canada 2006c, 5) and to "love it," referring to the stereotype of the hypersexual Russian woman (Ibid., 6). Representative of Panache Model and Talent Management Liz Crawford's contribution, however, mirrored the Natasha discourse that depicts a young, poor, and beautiful Eastern European girl lost in the sex trade:

This girl was a beautiful girl. She came from a very impoverished background. She saw this as her opportunity to get out of Romania, to model, make money, and send some money home to her family. She had no idea what the plans were for her. I don't know what ever became of this girl. ... I left Austria after two months, and she was still there. She was being passed around from client to client, that sort of thing. It was heartbreaking (Liz Crawford, Canada 2006e, 2).

Crawford's testimony recounts the story of a naïve young woman who, trying to improve her life, leaves home and becomes lost in prostitution. The story she relayed about a beautiful, innocent Eastern European girl who is lured into the sex industry to escape poverty and leading to her destruction reproduces the international Natasha discourse.

In the instances cited above, it is poverty more than beauty that is the central device through which post-socialist female subjects are rendered as innocent and as legitimate victims. While idealized white femininity as represented through the women's physical beauty was not foregrounded in the same manner as it was in Malarek's *The Natashas*, whiteness nevertheless remained an unspoken marker of value that rendered the women's ordeals exceptional and makes their experiences of violence visible.

There were also witnesses who positioned post-socialist women in less generous terms as sex workers or individuals who are otherwise not qualified for entry into Canada. In the previous chapter, foreign exotic dancers were positioned initially as “queue jumpers” and undesirable immigrants, and suspicion of the women’s motives and legitimacy haunted these discussions as well. Such sentiments are similar to those of stripper contempt during the Sgro scandal, although their presence in the testimony of 2006 and 2007 is muted in comparison. Victor Malarek, while adamant that the women coming to Canada to work in the legalized system (i.e. with a visa) did so because of their difficult circumstances, suggests that they are so desperate that their willingness to “debase” themselves makes them undesirable migrants:

...If we start to entertain the idea of legalization, you will see foreign women quickly fill the void that local women who have real jobs won't do. The classic example of that is the strippers who we brought in from Romania to do things that Canadian strippers told me they would never do under any circumstances because they wouldn't debase themselves that much, but impoverished women who have nothing can easily do it (Victor Malarek, Canada 2006g, 5).

While Victor Malarek repeatedly made the claim that post-socialist women are forcibly sexually exploited because of their impoverished conditions, he also reproached them for “debasement” themselves to overcome their poverty.

Comments elsewhere also suggest that migrant exotic dancers are potentially duplicitous; they are sex trade workers or individuals who would not qualify for other avenues of immigration. While such comments do not explicitly name post-socialist women, because of the linkage between post-socialist women and the temporary work permits for exotic dancers in the governmental context, I contend that the discussion

refers primarily to post-socialist women even while it can be applied to other groups of migrant women as well:

The people who come here [on artist visas] are not necessarily all sex trade workers. I am sure that there are worthy candidates who have something good to offer the industry, but if their stock-in-trade is sex and prostitution, the visa should be denied (Detective Sergeant Michel Hamel, Canada 2006d, 18).

Or [women] come [to Canada] thinking they're coming as exotic dancers and that's as good as they're going to get, because that's how they're going to get around the immigration laws. Otherwise, they can't come, because our immigration laws now are such that women from certain countries, especially if they don't have a level of education or skills, can't come in to do the work. So they come in illegally (Hon. Maria Minna, Canada, 2006b, 13).

Stigma against sex work is partly responsible for the suggestion that women who would come to Canada to work as exotic dancers are undesirable or unqualified migrants even though other witnesses observed that Russian and post-socialist women had high levels of education (see also McDonald and Timoshkina 2007).

Above, Detective Sergeant Hamel, of the Risk Management and Special Victims/Sex Crimes Unit with the Toronto Police Service, sees sex workers as undesirable potential migrants to Canada, although it is unclear whether it is because they invite organized criminals into the country or because they are involved in criminal activity. Hon. Maria Minna's suggestion that exotic dancers in Canada on a temporary work visa are doing something illegal because they would not qualify for other types of visas betrays a bias against sex workers and individuals from non-Western countries – in this example, presumably Eastern and Central European countries – highlighting the

salience of meanings associated with gender, class, and nation in narratives of sex trafficking.

Many elements of the international Natasha discourse appear with consistency within debate on the human trafficking law and in testimony for the sex trafficking study. Foremost, post-socialist women are positioned as victims of sex trafficking. Similar to the narrative presented in *The Natashas*, securing female subjects' innocence is necessary for the cogency of the story. In the debates I examined here, poverty is used as a device to close-off ambiguity about the women's choice to be involved in sex work. Further, the women's Easternness permits them, at times, to be positioned as passive victims despite markers of agency, such as education.

At the same time, there is a persistent though much diminished discourse of contempt, rooted in stigma against sex work and anti-immigrant sentiments that are bound up with understandings of Central and Eastern Europe as poor, destitute, or criminal. There was suspicion that post-socialist women were duplicitous, connected to criminal elements, and were undesirable immigrants coming through the "back door" despite temporary work permits being a legal avenue of entry. Although the presence of such discourses was marginal in comparison to understandings given through the VAW paradigm, their presence is nevertheless important as it speaks to an ongoing ambiguity about how this particular group was conceptualized. Here, the women's status as sex workers, a heavily stigmatized subject position, from post-socialist (i.e. corrupt and criminalized) countries produces uncertainty about whether they truly belong in the Canadian nation. Yet, at the same time, their whiteness and perceived innocence marks their experiences of violence as causes for concern and state intervention.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, the positioning of post-socialist women as victims of sex trafficking can also be read in geopolitical terms as representing the failed socialist state. Suchland (2013) describes how the post-socialist context has been represented as failed, collapsed, and tragic; the Natasha figure becomes emblematic of the problems of post-socialism. The depiction of post-socialist space in the Sex Trafficking testimony was marked by corruption, criminalization, and human misery that at times appeared depraved and disturbing. Consider the comments of Irena Soltys, representative of Help Us Help the Children, an organization assisting children in Ukraine. Committee member MP Ed Fast asked Soltys if she could comment on “the degree, if any, to which Russian organized crime or perhaps eastern bloc organized crime is involved in the trafficking of children” (Canada 2006e, 13). She replies:

It’s a big issue, because Russian organized crime and other crime rings, the Yakuza, the triads, etc., are all heavily involved in human trafficking. The Hells Angels are the major operators in Canada, and I could be risking my life by saying this.

For example, I’ll take the [International Organization for Migration’s] Kiev office. Their rehabilitation centre treats over 1,000 women a year. These are only the cases that have been reported, and this is one centre in one city, so you can imagine how widespread the problem is. It’s estimated that currently over 40,000 women from Ukraine are trafficked. Imagine (Irene Soltys, Canada 2006e, 13).

Soltys mentioned Asian and domestic organized crime groups, and in doing so incorporated a variety of discourses on human trafficking circulating in Canada. However, her testimony replied specifically to a question about presence of Russian or Eastern organized crime syndicates, and spoke to widespread human trafficking in Ukraine in a manner that suggested a wide criminalization of Ukrainian society.



Organized crime is a rampant threat to women in Ukraine and perhaps even Soltys herself, remarking that she “could be risking her life” by discussing these matters.

Elsewhere in her testimony she described particularly horrific examples of sexual violence. In responding to a question about medical problems experienced by trafficked women, Soltys mentioned instances of forced reproduction: “There are other medical issues, as in a case I heard of recently, where a woman was impregnated fifteen times and the embryos were sold on the black market in Eastern Europe to a cosmetics industry” (Canada 2006e, 12). The image of forced reproduction and abortion for profit is particularly disturbing; however, it is one that does appear in the literature on human trafficking and post-socialism. Parvulsecu (2014) problematically conflates forced prostitution with forced reproduction in her book, where the principal figure in her chapter on sex trafficking was impregnated and forced to carry numerous pregnancies to term for profit. While Soltys did not discuss forced reproduction at length, her testimony depicted the post-socialist context as being depraved to the point of abjection and, germane to the debates I will examine in the following chapter, “uncivilized.” This portrayal also can also be found in the academic literature where post-socialist territories are positioned as abject spaces filled with human misery and violence.

Benjamin Perrin, representing the anti-trafficking organization The Future Group, and Victor Malarek provided similar types of testimony. Perrin, in a brief to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, presented a case of a trafficked Hungarian woman named Ms. Varga who was deported from Canada after being denied refugee status. The brief explained:

After she [Varga] came to Canada to join her girlfriend, her girlfriend's family forced her to work in the sex trade. The family had since been deported back to Hungary. Varga feared they would force her back into the sex trade if she was returned to Hungary ... Varga's doctor indicated she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and would suffer a complete psychological breakdown if she were returned to Hungary. (Future Group 2006, 3-4)

In this passage, Hungary is aligned with a degree of lawlessness (there is nothing to prevent the family from forcing the woman into sex work) that would lead to the woman's psychological destruction in the sex industry, pointing to the inability of the post-socialist state to protect its women from sexual violence.

Locating the development of the sex trafficking problem in Central and East European countries with the fall of the state socialism (Canada 2006g, 4), Victor Malarek explained that "the social safety net in Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, and all of those former Soviet countries [was] completely shattered; there's nothing left" (Ibid.). The imagery of there being "nothing" in post-socialist countries is powerful, and he went on to ask the Committee rhetorically: "Why do we have all these foreign women here from destitute countries...?" (Canada 2006g, 4). This statement was subsequently quoted in the House of Commons during the debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking.<sup>122</sup>

The witnesses in the sex trafficking study made it appear that there was very little good or redeeming within the post-socialist context rather linking it to lack, failure, depravity, and criminalization. Within this context the post-socialist female subject, foremost a victim of sex trafficking, was situated. This understanding of Central and

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<sup>122</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (22 February 2007), p. 7236 (Mr. Bruce Stanton, CPC MP).

Eastern Europe as an abject space can shed insight into the ambiguities surrounding the positioning of the post-socialist female subject. The post-socialist female subject's victimization is evidence of post-socialist states' failure and corruption, but at the same time her connection to this space links her to corruption and criminality. This ambiguity is evident in comments from both Victor Malarek and other witnesses who described post-socialist women as victims of trafficking but also in more contemptuous terms as undesirable because of the work they do, their willingness to act immorally, or their connection to post-socialist criminality. While the discussion of the post-socialist context was not exhaustive, the testimony given offers insight into how the post-socialist is conceptualized in Canadian governmental discourse.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown how Romanian foreign exotic dancers, initially seen as duplicitous queue jumpers, were later understood as exploited women and victims worthy of state protection once they were repositioned within the international Natasha discourse. As much as concerns of victimized white women conditioned the preoccupation with this group in Parliament, the policy responses proposed – that I will discuss in Chapter 6 – would exclude foreign exotic dancers from entry to Canada for their own good.

While foreign exotic dancers and other sex workers from Central and Eastern Europe arguably represent only a very small proportion of potentially forced workers, this did not prevent post-socialist sex trafficking from emerging as a conceptual frame for human trafficking in Canada pointing to a preoccupation with the victimization of white

femininity. The appearance of the troubling language of white slavery within parliamentary debate suggests that the post-socialist exotic dancer specifically, but also post-socialist sex workers more broadly, were conceptualized through the historical white slavery narrative that became enlivened in government discourse in the contemporary time.

Testimony given during the sex trafficking study shares similarities with the academic literature describing post-socialist abjection, and lends support to Suchland's (2013) insight that post-socialist sex trafficking is utilized symbolically as a referent for the failure of post-socialism itself. Despite being positioned as victims of sex trafficking, post-socialist female subjects were not fully de-linked from the criminality and depravity of post-socialist spaces and were positioned outside of normative social and economic structures. Post-socialist female subjects were thus positioned as "outsiders" to neoliberal globalization and, as such, appeared to invite threatening and unruly elements into the Canadian territory that legitimated calls for their exclusion.

## **Chapter VI: Nationalism and the Politics of Sex Trafficking: Protecting Women and “Visiting Canadian Values Upon the World”**

This used to be the stuff of dime store novels ... It is to our shock, horror, and dismay to have to admit in the year 2005 [human trafficking] is commonplace and in fact it is growing in practice. In developed nations, modern, contemporary countries such as Canada, it is incumbent upon us to lead the way by passing legislation that condemns this practice universally (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 27 September 2005, 8106).

### **Introduction**

The debates I engage with in this chapter, including the short example above, show qualities of moral outrage and sensationalism common to the nineteenth-century white slavery narrative (see Doezema 2010, 3). MP Pat Martin, adept at delivering salacious commentary, alludes to a national past when the sexual exploitation of women was a thing of stories during his speech in support of the law against human trafficking in 2005 (Bill C-49): now that human trafficking has reared its ugly head again it is incumbent upon the Canadian nation-state take the lead against this scourge.

In the previous chapter, I described the discursive shift evident during the Sgro scandal, the centrality of post-socialist sex trafficking to conceptualizations of human trafficking in Canada, and the ethnosexualization of post-socialist female subjects and post-socialist space in government discourse. The likening of post-socialist sex trafficking to white slavery seen in the last chapter suggests that, like the historical

narrative, nationalist and imperial understandings are deeply involved in contemporary concerns about trafficking of women in Canada. Nationalist fears over immigration have historically dogged feminist concerns about trafficking in women (Limoncelli 2010), and Kulick (2005) further shows that interests in maintaining national identity and cultural values in the face of perceived cultural differences seen to be introduced by immigrants manifests in contemporary debates on prostitution and sex trafficking.

Analysis in this chapter centres nationalism in debate on the human trafficking law in 2005 (C-49) and the motion to condemn international sex trafficking (M-153) during 2006 and 2007. These debates show a valorized Canadian national identity and notions of Canadian civilizational superiority. Such sentiments were expressed powerfully by MP Ed Fast:

The trafficking of human beings into our country for the purposes of sexual exploitation is a grave and growing threat to our nation. It is difficult for some of us to wrap our minds around the idea that slavery could be alive and well in a country as civilized as Canada. Sadly, it is true (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5877).

Fast's comment, similar to Martin's above, conveys moral indignation at the social ill threatening the civilized national community.

Canada was conceptualized as modern, civilized, and as a country with a moral obligation to "do good," and not only "do good," but play a forceful role in the global response to the "scourge" of human trafficking. Other geographic regions, including the post-socialist, were linked with tradition, crime, and patriarchal attitudes that set them apart from the modern, Western world as anachronistic spaces (see McClintock 1995; Tlostanova 2010).

The interest in this chapter is to show how discourses on sex trafficking in the Canadian government context were suffused with expressions of Canadian nationalism rooted in fears about foreign threats and foreign cultural values related to gender equality and treatment of women. In this Canadian variant of sexualized nationalism, masculine sexuality remains positioned as the thrust of civilizational progress as shown through an interest in disciplining men's sexual behaviour in a manner understood to be linked to gender equality. There is a two-fold advantage to this approach, the securing of a superior, progressive national identity in a globalized world and the semblance of responsiveness to feminist concerns about violence against women.

Building on the analysis in Chapter 5, I have also included testimony from the Standing Committee on the Status of Women's sex trafficking study, as the post-socialist context and female subjects occupied a significant presence in the testimony as they did in the debate on the trafficking law. As I showed in the previous chapter, post-socialist spaces were associated with criminality, disruption, and non-egalitarian gender relations, forms of alterity-making that positioned the post-socialist as non-Western. In this chapter, I describe how post-socialist countries served as an element in a larger discussion through which parliamentarians positioned the Canadian state as a global arbiter and liberator through discourses of aggressive yet sensitive nationalism, emphasizing Canada's duty to end the modern global slave trade.

In addition to the debates already introduced in Chapter 5, I will also explore debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation (Bill C-57). Bill C-57 was introduced in the House of Commons in May 2007 and debated in June 2007. It contained an amendment to the IRPA that would allow immigration authorities to deny

otherwise qualified temporary foreign workers entry into Canada if suspected they would be abused or exploited in their employment. While the legislation was applicable to all temporary foreign workers, the subtext of the debate was evidently the Sgro scandal, foreign exotic dancers, and human trafficking.<sup>123</sup>

The history of this legislation is complex and some context provides necessary background. The amendment was introduced numerous times in different sessions of Parliament yet was not passed until 2012 when it was included in the Conservative Government's omnibus crime bill, the Safe Streets and Communities Act (Bill C-10), that contained amendments to numerous policy areas. Bill C-57 was first introduced in May 2007, however died on the Order Paper<sup>124</sup> when the session of Parliament was prorogued in September 2007. The legislation was re-introduced as Bill C-17 in fall 2007 and was studied by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in January 2008; the Committee did not report back before the end of the session. It was introduced again in June 2009 as Bill C-45 and, once more, died on the Order Paper. In November 2010, the legislation was revived yet again as Bill C-56 and renamed the Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act. As before, the Bill died on the Order Paper when the session of Parliament ended.

Debate on Bill C-57 on June 5, 2007 was extensive and represents the only instance when this legislation was debated at length at any point in its history. In January 2008, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration undertook a study of the

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<sup>123</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10152 (Hon. Helena Guergis, CPC MP); (5 June 2007), p. 10133 (Mr. Ed Komarknicki, CPC MP); (5 June 2007), p. 10136 (Mr. Ed Komarknicki, CPC MP).

<sup>124</sup> When a session of Parliament is prorogued or terminated, all unfinished business from that session drops or "dies on the Order Paper" as committees lose their power to transact parliamentary business; the effect is to produce a fresh start for the upcoming session.



legislation, and the evidence given to the Committee also comprises data examined in this study. In this chapter, I will show that debate on Bill C-57 illustrates how concerns over protecting women from exploitation and human trafficking became linked to fears of foreign threats, crime, and concerns over immigration. While expressions of nationalism and imperialism are not as pronounced as in the debate surrounding the human trafficking law nor the motion to condemn international sex trafficking, debate on C-57 supports my argument that concerns about protection women from human trafficking became connected to fears of foreign threats.

In the previous chapter, post-socialist exotic dancers were the focus of much of the parliamentary discussion; however, in the debates examined in this chapter the discourses on sex trafficking are more varied, particularly those within the debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking. While post-socialist sex trafficking was indeed a preoccupation during the debates on the human trafficking law, the discussions covered in this chapter also voiced concerns related to different geographic regions as well as the trafficking of adults and children.<sup>125</sup> Even while the focus of debate was not exclusively on Central and Eastern European countries, directing attention to how the post-socialist is positioned within broader narratives of human trafficking is largely unexamined in the literature on trafficking in Canada or within transnational feminist studies even while the post-socialist remains important to conceptualizations of human trafficking in Canada.

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<sup>125</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5870 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP); (8 December 2006), p. 5874 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP).

## **Partisanship in Debates on Human Trafficking Policies**

There was a significant degree of overlap among the Members of Parliament who participated in dialogue on the four respective matters addressed in this study (Bill C-49, C-57, M-153, and the sex trafficking study). While there were not any Members who were present for all four, several participated in discussions about the Sgro scandal and debate on the human trafficking policy (Bill C-49): Harold Macklin, Hedy Fry, Irwin Cotler, and Gurmant Grewal. Likewise, several were present in discussion about the Sgro matter and debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation (Bill C-57): Bill Siksay, Jason Kenney, Meili Faille, Helena Guergis, and Judy Sgro herself. As well, a number of Members were involved in the sex trafficking study and debate on Motion M-153: Joy Smith, Irene Mathysen, Judy Sgro, Nicole Demers, and Maria Mourani. It is unclear whether this had any demonstrable effect. The privileging of the VAW paradigm in the sex trafficking study and during the debate on the motion may reflect the participation of Joy Smith; Smith was (and remains) an outspoken anti-trafficking advocate holding prohibitionist perspectives on prostitution (Smith 2014) who strongly promoted these perspectives in Parliament in the debates she was involved in.

The debates surrounding these different policy matters were remarkably non-partisan. Human trafficking was routinely described as a form of slavery<sup>126</sup> and as an affront to human rights<sup>127</sup> and dignity,<sup>128</sup> understandings that elicited strong consensus. Some minor points of contention were evident, however. In relation to the human trafficking law, Conservative members consistently advocated for mandatory minimum

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<sup>126</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7997 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

<sup>127</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8619 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib MP).

<sup>128</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5872 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP); (17 October 2005), p. 8619 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib MP); (26 September 2005), p. 8034 (Ms. Christiane Gagnon, BQ MP).

sentences<sup>129</sup> whereas other parties did not support this approach.<sup>130</sup> The only commentary that suggested human trafficking was something other than organized crime came from MP Gurmunt Grewal, interestingly a Conservative, who noted that most victims of trafficking are “legitimate people, who the system was meant for, [and] are given the run around, are not allowed to come through the proper channels and are being abused by [traffickers]”.<sup>131</sup> In the debate on the motion to condemn sex international trafficking, NDP members reminded the House the motion was limited in its exclusive focus on trafficking for sexual purposes and that “trafficking can occur in many sectors that depend on migrant labour, such as agriculture, the garment sector and domestic work.”<sup>132</sup> The NDP critiqued the emphasis on sex trafficking in legislation while neglecting trafficking for other forms of work. However, the motion received wide support from all parties including the NDP.

The most apparent variation among these different matters was the presence of a political-economic analysis of labour migration, barriers facing migrant workers, systematic problems facing women, and the problematization of policies – notably from the NDP – that limit migration opportunities for women in debate on Bill C-57 in 2007. While foreign exotic dancers were not seen as legitimate workers within discussions of migrant labour exploitation, a sex work as labour discourse was, however, introduced by members of the NDP.<sup>133</sup> Though it remained a marginal discourse and Conservative

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<sup>129</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8621 (Mr. Myron Thompson, Lib MP); (17 October 2005), p. 8625 (Mr. Mark Warama, CPC MP).

<sup>130</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8623 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib MP).

<sup>131</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8635 (Mr. Gurmunt Grewal, CPC MP).

<sup>132</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (22 February 2007), p. 7234 (Mrs. Irene Mathyssen, NDP MP).

<sup>133</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10143 (Ms. Libby Davies, NDP MP).

members rejected this approach<sup>134</sup> it remains an evident variation in analysis.

### **Other Imperial Differences: A Decolonial Approach to Post-socialist Sex Trafficking**

This chapter continues to address the positioning of post-socialist space in government discourse introduced in Chapter 5 and the relations of domination and subordination that were thereby legitimated. Some scholars propose that postcolonial theory can be usefully applied to theorize the experiences of Eastern Europe because of the lengthy histories of Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, and Soviet domination that have existed within these regions (Carey and Raciborski 2004; Morozov 2013) as well as their historical peripheralization vis-à-vis Western Europe (Todorova 1997; Wolff 1994). Influenced by the Saidian theory of orientalism, Maria Todorova (1997) introduces the idea of balkanism to describe the positioning of Eastern European regions as less-than-Western in relation to Western Europe. Alexander Kiossev (2009) describes how the historical positioning of peripheral European countries led to the self-colonization of peripheral Europe itself as “European but not quite” and as struggling to catch-up to “Big Other” Europe (Kiossev 2009, n.p.) .

Postcolonial theoretical perspectives are important approaches for theorizing the post-socialist, particularly from within the Western context. However, theoretical work that speaks to the colonial histories of imperial Europe in Africa, Asia, and the Americas cannot be applied to the post-socialist without careful attention. While Russian modernity produced its own forms of racialization (Tlostanova 2010), and at different times Eastern Europeans were likened to racial Others within the Western context, it remains that racial

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<sup>134</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10179 (Mr. Collin Carrie, CPC MP).

conceptualizations and exclusions are deeply embedded within European colonial projects and their attendant histories. While Eastern Europeans may be seen as less privileged or less valorized European identities, the understanding of a shared Christian heritage and racialization as white subjects locates them as part of Europe against Muslims and those historically categorized as non-white. Thus, post-colonial scholarship captures certain aspects of the relationship between the post-socialist and the West, however it is not always applicable to the post-socialist context.

Central and Eastern European countries occupied significant space within the debates on the human trafficking law and the motion to condemn international sex trafficking. However, as is suggested by the data explored in Chapter 5, references to post-socialism refer to symbolic realities as much as they speak to material realities; Suchland's (2013) recounting of post-socialist abjection in narratives of sex trafficking speaks to the symbolic aspect these representations of the post-socialist hold in the Western context. In the data analyzed in this study, trafficking came to be conceptualized as a problem of organized crime, poverty, unprogressive gender values, and general dysfunction in post-socialist societies.

Post-socialist countries were mentioned numerous times in the debates examined in the years 2005–2007. In addition to Pat Martin's references to Hungary and Romania already noted in Chapter 5, debate on the human trafficking law and the motion to condemn international sex trafficking referred to: the Soviet Union,<sup>135</sup> Eastern Europe,<sup>136</sup> the Eastern Bloc, Moldova,<sup>137</sup> Ukraine, Bulgaria, Slovenia,<sup>138</sup> Poland, and Russia.<sup>139</sup> The

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<sup>135</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7997 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8628 (Mr. Marc Lemay, BQ MP); (17 October 2005), p. 8633 (Hon. Keith Martin, Lib MP); (22 February 2007), p. 7231 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP).

post-socialist region was seen as a source of girls and women for prostitution and of workers for other forms of labour:

I remember being in Russia in the spring of this year as part of the preparation for the G8 meeting ... and my counterpart talked about the major problem in Russia. It is not only a source of women and children to be exploited, it is a consumer of it, and a country where a great number of human beings are trafficked (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5876).

The most vulnerable people are the young and those who come from poor countries. They are often used as cheap labour. I received from an international database information about the countries that are most affected. They are as follows: Moldova, Romania, Mali, Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, Colombia and Kyrgyzstan. We can see that what ties together all those countries is the fact that they are extremely poor (Hon. Keith Martin, Lib MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 September 2005, 8633).

Post-socialist sex trafficking was understood as one dimension of a larger, international problem. Owing perhaps to concerns surrounding the work permit for foreign exotic dancers in Parliament and the influence of Victor Malarek's perspectives, post-socialist sex trafficking was a preoccupation in debate on the human trafficking law.

In a speech made by MP Nina Grewal during debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking, she drew on notions of post-socialist states being undeveloped and impoverished. Grewal explained that it is in developing countries where "criminals prey upon those who want to improve their lives."<sup>140</sup> She went on to quote the

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<sup>138</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5870 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP); (8 December 2006), p. 5871 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP); (17 October 2005), p. 8633 (Hon. Keith Martin, Lib MP);

<sup>139</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5876 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP); Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 8035 (Ms. Christiane Gagnon, BQ MP).

<sup>140</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5876 (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP).

testimony of Irene Sushko, representative from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, during the sex trafficking study to support her analysis of the situation:

These criminals target the vulnerable. They care not what harm they perpetrate. They make lavish promises of possibilities in western countries to those eager to believe. Then they cruelly dash this hope by trapping their victims in virtual enslavement (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5876).

Listen to what Irene Sushko of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has to say. She says that trafficking of human beings ‘constitutes horrific acts of slavery, the shameful assault on the dignity of children, the exploitation of the vulnerable for profit.’ She goes on to say that 80% of all victims are women and children who are lured from developing countries with false promises of jobs and a better life.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine how a human being could twist himself into being so cruel and heartless. Women and girls, with virtually nothing, become filled with hope for a better life. Only later after they land in their new country do they discover the tragic truth that they must toil work as prostitutes to pay the cost for their trip (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5877).

While Grewal is not referring exclusively to post-socialist women, the testimony from Sushko explicating a linkage between Canada, Ukraine, and the problem of post-socialist sex trafficking suggests that meanings associated with the post-socialist context form part of framework for conceptualizing human trafficking in Canada.

The inclusion of post-socialist countries in articulating the narrative of human trafficking was not uncommon. Joy Smith introduced this motion by explaining that victims “come from orphanages in Ukraine and from Asia, Eastern European countries, Ethiopia and others,”<sup>141</sup> which mirrors Keith Martin’s manner of discussing countries

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<sup>141</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5870 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).

from Africa, South America, and the former Soviet Union, unifying them on the basis of economic destitution.

Grewal and other parliamentarians linked the post-socialist to a group of regions symbolically and geographically mapped outside of the Western context as underdeveloped and dysfunctional. Women from vast areas of the non-Western world were categorized together as a large, decontextualized, “vulnerable group” whose ambitions render them gullible because they are poor. A comment made by Hon. Hedy Fry regarding impoverishment and consent during the debates on the human trafficking law captured this sentiment:

Status of Women Canada did a survey ... which talked about women who came to Canada specifically to work at promised legal jobs only to find themselves forced into prostitution. Sadly, these women were so desperate to leave the terrible conditions back home that a majority of the women in the survey responded that they would rather stay in prostitution rather than go back home because going back home left them with absolutely no hope. This is not consent. It is exploitation of human misery, human poverty and human fear (Hon. Hedy Fry, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 October 2005, 8639).

Above, poverty is used to position trafficked women as passive and non-agential subjects and deny them the ability to consent.

Fry’s reasoning shows parallels to the positioning of post-socialist women in *The Natashas*, where an ethnosexualized lens saw the women as passive and unsophisticated in contrast to the modern, Western feminine subject who has already been emancipated from patriarchal control. There is also a strongly gendered dimension to Grewal’s comments on the previous page, where men are positioned as “cruel and heartless” criminals who exploit women and girls “with virtually nothing.” This gendered



characterization of trafficking similarly parallels the positioning of post-socialist male subjects in *The Natashas* as particularly violent and unscrupulous in contrast to the ethical Canadian male subject.

The inclusion of the post-socialist within these debates is instructive for what is assumed rather than what is articulated directly. Through inserting the post-socialist context into a binary framework of Western/non-Western, a simultaneous peripheralization and homogenization occurs whereby post-socialist space is bracketed-off from the West. The use of decontextualized references to various post-socialist countries (Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Slovenia), each of which has a unique historical, cultural, and colonial experience, suggest that the post-socialist was used as a symbolic marker to indicate that which is non-Western and non-Canadian.

The insertion of post-socialist countries into a binary Western/non-Western framework also betrays a lack of familiarity on the part of parliamentarians with Central Eastern European countries that comprise the post-socialist context. Parliamentarians appeared unaware that many of the former Eastern bloc countries had ascended into the European Union by the time this debate took place (including Slovenia, Poland, Romania, and Hungary) and that the post-socialist context is complex and with many internal divisions (Riabchuck 2011). The use of a monolithic “Eastern Europe” or “Eastern bloc” or reference to other decontextualized examples appears more symbolically than empirically significant. The representation of Eastern Europe as a homogenized, non-Western space suggests the epistemic appropriation of Eastern Europe that is continually reinvented post-socialist spaces as peripheral locations.

While not figuring centrally in the debate around the motion to condemn international trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation, post-socialist women and former socialist states played a role in how parliamentarians conceptualized the trafficking in girls and women for sexual exploitation within Canada. Post-socialist space was grouped alongside other locations seen as non-Western, poor, and undeveloped, highlighting the dialectical relationship through which Canada continually repositions and invents itself as modern and Western vis-à-vis the post-socialist.

### **The Courageous and Compassionate National Community**

In Chapter 2, I described a form of supercharged Canadian nationalism that seeks to do good by asserting ethical and moral superiority that emerged during Stephen Harper's leadership of the Conservative federal government. This variation of nationalism emphasized loyalty and duty yet was suffused with elements of force and aggressiveness. To reiterate, John Ibbitson suggested that Canadian nationalism under Harper likened Canadian "greatness" to a "courageous warrior and a compassionate neighbor," rooted in the "Idea of the North."<sup>142</sup>

The debates on the human trafficking law (Bill C-49) and the motion to condemn the international trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation (Motion M-153) became sites to re-affirm notions of Canadian national civility. As I will show later, these debates were informed by an imperial attitude about the position of Canada in contemporary world order and Canadian national values; Canada was the site of civilizational superiority. Enrique Dussel (1995) describes the colonial dimension of

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<sup>142</sup> John Ibbitson, "Tory Strategy Seeks to Stoke Canadians' True Patriot Love," *The Globe and Mail*, April 19, 2011.

Western modernity as the centering of the West within a world history it created (as cited in Tlostanova 2010, 19). This attitude manifested as a sense of global awareness and is similar to the idea of panoptical time described by McClintock (1995), whereby time was formulated in the nineteenth century such that “the image of global history could be consumed ... in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility” (1995, 37).

Through references to historical events such as white slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, parliamentarians situated Canada within a broader global history centering imperial Europe. Members of Parliament who made use of references to white slavery did so uncritically, as if to describe an empirical reality, betraying a lack of awareness of its ideological dimensions that foreground fears about the threats of foreigners and protecting national boundaries (Valverde 1991; see Doezema 2010 for an international example).

There were numerous references made to the transatlantic slave trade. MP Joe Comartin invoked the history of slavery to position Canada as a benevolent leader, explaining that “until a few years ago ... we had believed that slavery in all of its forms had been eradicated. We certainly think of the steps that were taken back in the 1800s and the role Canada played in outlawing slavery in Canada.”<sup>143</sup> He continued:

I was recently at a testimonial for a husband, who was an escaped slave from the United States, and his wife. We unveiled a plaque in the west end of the [unnamed] city as a testimony to the work they had done around that period of time, that their predecessors had done in Canada and the work that they had done in the United States to bring what we believed was an end to slavery on this continent (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 October 2005, 8629).

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<sup>143</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8629 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

Ed Fast also referred to nineteenth-century abolitionist struggles against the slave trade, positioning Canada within the history of European imperialism and civilizing missions:

The movie [Amazing Grace] tells the story of Lord Wilberforce, an 18th century member of Parliament, who spent almost his entire life fighting the scourge of slavery in England ... Sadly, today the scourge of human trafficking has again raised its ugly head, this time in Canada. The typical victim of human trafficking is a teenage girl or young woman from an Eastern bloc or Asian country (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 22 February 2007, 7231).

Both Comartin and Fast situate Canada within a global history where the West is aligned with civility and defense of human rights.

In making a troubling comparison between historical and contemporary versions of slavery (see Maynard 2015), Comartin and Fast position Canada within modernity, as enlightened and as standing for freedom, and in possession of civilizational superiority. This situating of Canada in relation to the rest of the world reflects Tlostanova's understanding that modernity is imposed through the philosophy of history in the 'form of a spatial-temporal matrix ... whereby geography becomes chronology' (Tlostanova 2010, 21). In Fast's comments, Canada is positioned as an enlightened, civilized Western country in comparison to other uncivilized, less progressive Southern and Eastern areas where slavery continues to persist. The narrative that evolved placed Canada on the "right" side of history. Comartin expressed his ideas about progress in relation to human trafficking:

One of the points I always make in that regard is that we conquered slavery, slavery that was part of any number of institutional and government makeups from time immemorial. We

beat that one. We progressed (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 7997).

He went on to explain that there is a small part of the world that has not yet progressed, “individuals mostly involved with organized crime” who are responsible for human trafficking. The understanding that developed was one that conceptualized trafficking as a global problem associated with non-Western countries’ lack of progressiveness or being out of step with modernity. Against this backdrop, the post-socialist context along with other areas considered non-Western were seen as locations of unprogressiveness.

### **Foreign Threats and Foreign Values**

While human trafficking was often conceptualized as a form of slavery and an affront to basic human rights and Canadian civility, it was also widely considered a type of crime, something that could be contained or defended against rather than a form of exploitative relationship produced through the social and economic inequalities of neoliberal capitalism. Such circumstances were identified by Anne Gallagher (2010), who explains that with the development of the new U.N. Protocol, what had been dealt with in the United Nations system as a human rights matter in the past became one of crime control in contemporary times. In the debates on the trafficking law and the motion to condemn sex trafficking, the protection of human rights was aligned with criminal laws against trafficking in persons as it was linked to criminality. In Canada, post-socialist exotic dancers were understood to be the victims of organized crime: “[Young women from former Soviet republics] end up in the clutches of criminal organizations that take away their passports and have well organized rings forcing them into strip clubs

or prostitution.”<sup>144</sup> Similarly, in debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation, protecting women and victims of human trafficking was linked to fears of criminality, particularly of the Canadian immigration system being used by criminals to victimize people.<sup>145</sup>

Overall, how human trafficking was understood had geopolitical features; it was repeatedly described as a foreign threat rooted in foreign values, something that arrives from afar and takes root in the Canadian state:

The vast majority of these crimes are perpetrated by organized crime around the globe. Because of the nature of the traffic in this country, a great deal of that organized crime, and in particular the ringleaders of those crime syndicates are not here in Canada because the crime originates elsewhere, for example, in the former Soviet Union, in Vietnam, or in China. It is in the country of origin where the crime originates. That is where the organized crime head pins tend to be situated (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 7998).

However one of the reservations we have with the bill is that, as we know, a good number of the individual criminals, as well as the victims, are coming from other countries, that the source of the problem is coming from a country offshore and is coming through our territory often times for these people to be trafficked into Canada, but more often to be trafficked into the United States with us being a conduit (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 October 2005, 8622).

Comartin described human trafficking as a threat from foreign criminals who bring criminality to the Canadian border. Variations on this geopolitical manner of describing the threat of human trafficking saw it as a disease afflicting Canada and the rest of the

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<sup>144</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7994 (Mr. Richard Marceau, BQ MP).

<sup>145</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10135 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, BQ MP).

world. Joy Smith likened human trafficking to a cancer on Canadian society, as did MP Keith Martin:

I have introduced [the motion to condemn international sex trafficking] today because I believe this fast-growing global crime has penetrated our Canadian borders and is growing without the knowledge and awareness of the Canadian public. It is a cancer on our Canadian society and needs to be eliminated (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5871).

Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to speak on [the human trafficking law], which addresses an often under-reported plight, a virus and a cancer that has spread across the world, affecting some of the most underprivileged and vulnerable souls in some of the poorest countries of the world (Hon. Keith Martin, Lib MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 September 2005, 8633).

Tellingly, MP Brian Murphy identified human trafficking as an external threat to both the Canadian state and, importantly, to Canadian national values.

Sadly, this abomination is growing. It is the dark underbelly of increasing levels of global trade in goods and services. Along with it, we see a rise in this global trade, if we can call it that. Many governments around the world are trying to act and many of their modest initiatives are simply not enough. For Canadians, in particular, this foul crime cuts at the very heart of our most cherished notions of justice and morality (Mr. Brian Murphy, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 22 February 2007, 7232).

Murphy's comment points to number of significant elements. He is making a comparison, on a global scale, of the paltry responses of other governments to human trafficking in relation to the Canadian approach. This reflects Barbara Heron's (2007) idea of colonial continuities and global awareness as well as the "rhetoric of salvation," an element of the Western modern project, identified by Tlostanova (2010).

The idea that the response of other states to human trafficking is inadequate also appeared elsewhere in the debate in speeches by Joe Comartin. Comartin explained that one of the problems with the international struggle against human trafficking was that source countries “[give] a very blasé response and no action.<sup>146</sup>” He recounted his trip to Russia in preparation for a G8 meeting, remarking that “[human trafficking laws] are reasonably developed in the community but there is very little enforcement of [the laws] in Russia.<sup>147</sup>” He then went on to name this as a problem in Asia, Africa, and South America, all of which are positioned, alongside Russia, as lagging behind the Canadian and Western response.

Brian Murphy also remarked that human trafficking is a crime antithetical to deeply held Canadian values of justice and morality. A noteworthy aspect of the debate on the human trafficking law and the motion to condemn the international trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation was the comparison of Canadian values to those values that are considered un-Canadian.

I wonder if we are going to have some influence over the initiatives taken in some of the other countries which are the highest perpetrators. Canada cannot just go to those countries and do something without taking a strong stand, defining our values, defining who Canadians are and how we feel about these things, how we feel about the exploitation of persons, the vulnerable, the weak, the poor. That is the kind of Canada we are ... We need to express that within this legislation (Mr. Paul Szabo, Lib MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 7998).

I do not believe there is any Canadian who would suggest that any member of the House and any Canadian does not see this conduct as abhorrent, and a value, if that is what we are expressing of Canada in wanting to prohibit this, wanting to get to the very root

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<sup>146</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5876 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*



of it and wanting to root it out so that we are never faced with it (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 26 September 2005, 7998).

Paul Szabo's comments suggest that there are factors or values in countries with higher incidences of human trafficking that are inferior to Canadian values, but also that Canada should also be an example to other countries of what sort of values to adopt. Comartin likewise spoke to this idea of values, and the understanding that by legislating against human trafficking there is a value that is being expressed, a value that highlights Canadian civilizational superiority.

The criminalization of human trafficking was seen in the debates as an expression of Canadian values; through its laws, Canada would be an example to the rest of the world. Many regions of the world were located in the negative side of this relationship, and associated with being inept or unable to control human trafficking within their borders or as repositories of inferior values that made them a threat to Canada and the Western world. Comartin captured these sentiments in a comment elsewhere in debates on the human trafficking law: "it is almost a moral obligation that we should say to the countries that do not have sufficient law enforcement that they have to go begin to do that. We are conveying a message."<sup>148</sup>

### **Progress and Protecting Women and Children from Harm**

An element of the comparison between Canadian values and those considered un-Canadian developed around the treatment of women and children, who were understood to be the groups most vulnerable to trafficking. In his remarks introducing the human

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<sup>148</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8630 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP).

trafficking law, Hon. Irwin Cotler stated that “almost all of [the] victims, ninety-eight percent of them, are the most vulnerable, women and children.”<sup>149</sup> As noted in the academic literature on human trafficking, estimates of trafficking in persons vary widely (Merry 2015; Weitzer 2007), as we can see when we compare the estimate in Cotler’s statement to Keith Martin’s speech on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking: “the vast majority, more than sixty percent, of the people who are being trafficked are young women, who ... become part of prostitution as their identity papers are removed.”<sup>150</sup> Problems with quantification aside, women were understood to be the primary victims of human trafficking, thus the assertion of Canadian values of helping the vulnerable not surprisingly included notions about appropriate treatment and protection of women. Commentary made by Comartin sheds insight into meanings underpinning Canadian values with respect to gender:

...We also have to get back to the root causes of why women in particular are able to be exploited so efficiently. That means going back to root causes, such as poverty, cultural mores and the acceptance, for instance, of violence in sexual relations. Those are the vast majority of the root causes in other countries (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5876).

Comartin implies here that Canadian values do not condone violence in sexual relationships.

In his speech above, Comartin located one of the root causes of human trafficking in other countries with cultural values that tolerate or endorse violence against women. While this was the only instance in the debates of such overt imperialism, it nevertheless

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<sup>149</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (17 October 2005), p. 8619 (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib MP).

<sup>150</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5872 (Hon. Keith Martin, Lib MP).

highlights an important aspect of the discussion. His observation implies that the (implicitly masculine) Canadian national subject has progressed beyond patriarchal domination of women, positioning violence against women on the less progressive end of a linear progress model; there is a juxtaposition of modernity (along with its attendant gender egalitarianism) with tradition. By associating human trafficking with cultural values that condone violence against women, Comartin is suggesting that patriarchal attitudes permitting violence against women are external and inferior to beliefs held by Canadian national subjects who regard men and women as equal. Extending this idea to the national community, the Canadian nation-state can legitimately position itself as a masculine protector of the vulnerable:

...I stand with my colleagues in supporting tough measures to prevent criminals from having their way. I am supportive of the government's acting to protect women and children from being exploited by cruel and heartless criminals (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5877).

[Bill C-49] is about providing increased protection for those who are most vulnerable to this criminal violation of human rights, namely women and children. It is about bringing the perpetrators to justice and ensuring that human traffickers are held to account fully for this criminal conduct (Hon. Irwin Cotler, Lib MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 October 2005, 8619).

Both Grewal and Cotler's comments evoke understandings expressed by Prime Minister Harper in his speech in Afghanistan about a sense of national moral purpose, cited in Chapter 2. This is the idea that Canada has a duty to protect those who cannot protect themselves, to be both courageous and compassionate. This sentiment is powerfully

expressed by Brian Murphy, exposing the imperial contours of this discussion that positions Canada as the protector of the world's women and children:

Let us visit upon the world our nation's values toward human rights and our vision of Canada, that of a safe, community-driven society that protects those who would be exploited: children and women. Let us export that value to the world (Mr. Brian Murphy, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 22 February 2007, 7233).

Murphy's speech invokes ideas about what it means to be Canadian that are structured by ideas of empire. In positioning Canada as an observer to the rest of the world, a location with enlightened gender relations, and the obligation to protect vulnerable women and children, parliamentarians are utilizing narratives and patterns of knowledge produced within imperial and colonial relations and Western modernity to describe and analyze a "new" problem of human trafficking in the contemporary Canadian context. The idea of "exporting" enlightened Canadian values contains similar notions as the nineteenth-century idea of the civilizing mission.

The comments of Cotler and Murphy carry the fingerprints of imperial patterns of knowledge and power relations. Other Members of Parliament similarly presented a narrative about Canada as a leader, a country that stands for the human rights and dignity of those in other countries. Canada was positioned as a compassionate and just nation that protects the vulnerable:

The world's people often look to Canada for leadership. We must not let them down. That is why I am in full support of the motion. I believe that Canada, blessed as we are, can do a great deal to put a stop to this victimization of vulnerable people around the world (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 February 2006, 5876).

Indeed, the trafficking of women and children, in particular, for the purpose of sexual exploitation is a scourge of the world. As a leader in the world, I believe that Canada has a duty and responsibility to lead in combatting this scourge both here at home and in other countries (Mrs. Nina Grewal, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 February 2006, 5876).

Canada must be a leader and a model in this area [of human trafficking law]. This evening, we have the opportunity to adopt a bill that will put Canada in the position to call upon other nations to follow our lead and put a stop to this unacceptable form of modern slavery in our world today (Mr. Marc Lemay, BQ MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 17 October 2005, 8628).

In the quotes above, Canada is positioned as a dutiful leader in the fight against modern slavery.

MP Mario Silva expressed similar sentiments. He commented how “Canada is a great model for the rest of the world. We should be proud of ... what this country has done to protect children and women.”<sup>151</sup> These sentiments constitute a courageous yet compassionate Canadian nationalism centering on protecting women and children. These comments and that below constitute expressions of empire based upon notions identified by Razack (2004), that is, a structure of feeling and the powerful belief in our ability to lead, to stand for freedom, order, and justice. These understandings are emphasized by MPs Ed Fast and Bruce Stanton:

We in Canada, as a free and democratic nation, have a duty to vigorously oppose this vile form of enslavement wherever it exists. To do anything less would be an abrogation of our responsibilities as caring and just human beings (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 8 December 2006, 5878).

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<sup>151</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (27 September 2005), p. 8104 (Mr. Mario Silva, Lib. MP).

Canada is a signatory to the U.N. Protocol. We, like other nations that put human rights and civility in the forefront of our public policy, we are duty bound to take up this cause and strive to address it here and abroad to the extent we can (Mr. Bruce Stanton, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 2 February 2007, 7237).

Here, Fast positions the Canadian state as a site of emancipation, with accompanying notions of salvation and liberation, such as identified by Tlostanova (2010). It is Canada's obligation to fight against slavery (i.e. human trafficking) that exists in parts of the world without freedom or democracy.

In the debates explored in this section, the “fight” against human trafficking appears as a struggle between Western values and those deemed to be traditional or out of step with modernity. There is a sense in the debates that Canada, as a defender of human rights, has a duty to lead others into modernity itself. Pat Martin captured this sentiment when he remarked that “in developed nations, modern, contemporary countries such as Canada, it is incumbent upon us to lead the way by passing legislation that condemns [human trafficking] universally.”<sup>152</sup> The narrative of human trafficking parliamentarians utilized reflects Razack's understanding of the new world order: the “civilized” West set-off against the East and the South. A similar understanding was given elsewhere by Comartin, who explained that slavery has been outlawed all over the world, but there remains a small part of the world where it still persists.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (27 September 2005), p. 8106 (Mr. Pat Martin, NDP MP)

<sup>153</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7997 (Mr. Joe Comartin, NDP MP)

## **Protecting Women and Stopping Trafficking at the Border**

Despite the lofty discussion about protecting the human rights and dignity of vulnerable women and children, protecting women from victimization became linked to crime and immigration control and, as MP Ed Komarnicki indicated in his speech on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation, “stop[ping] trafficking at our borders.”<sup>154</sup> In this final section, I will explore debate on Bill C-57 that was proposed as a legislative remedy to “close the loophole” permitting foreign exotic dancers to work in Canada. Debate on this particular amendment is of interest as post-socialist foreign exotic dancers were a central concern. This underscores the salience of white femininity to securing national boundaries, and at the same time speaks to the way in which measures to counter human trafficking aim to exclude “unruly” subjects or those who may require state resources (see Goldberg 2009), such as criminals or victims, from the national territory. Protecting not only women but also Canada from criminal exploitation justified the need for this legislative intervention.

While the proposed amendment was framed in neutral terms targeting the general category of temporary foreign workers, ending the so-called “stripper program” appears to be the purpose of this legislation even though the Conservatives emphasized its application to numerous labour sectors:

The amendments would give immigration officers that authority to deny work permits in situations where applicants may be at risk ... The proposed changes could be used to prevent abuse in a number of possible scenarios, which could include low skilled workers and exotic dancers, as well as other potential victims of human trafficking (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 5 June 2007, 10133).

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<sup>154</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10133 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP).

Discourses surrounding post-socialist exotic dancers present during the Sgro scandal had shifted remarkably by this time and the hostility evident in the earlier Sgro debate was supplanted by concerns about protecting women once the matter was conceptualized as sex trafficking as we saw in Chapter 5.

The frequency with which debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation turned to foreign exotic dancers and sex trafficking suggests it is reasonable to conclude that the specific target of the legislation were indeed foreign exotic dancers. Hon. Jim Karygiannis patronized Les Linklater of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration by highlighting how the legislation had popularly become known as “the strippers’ bill” (Canada 2008, 2). While the legislation was neutral in its language and applicable to a wide range of workers, the preoccupation in Parliament with exotic dancers suggests Karygiannis and Teledgi were correct in their assessments.

As was seen in Chapters 4 and 5, references to Victor Malarek’s *The Natashas* entered frequently into parliamentary discussion, with the Natasha discourse appearing once again in the context of debate on Bill C-57. MP Catherine Bell commented on her time observing the work of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women where some one was talking about the film *The Natashas*,<sup>155</sup> noting that in the film “women were coming from Romania and they had no idea they were coming to be sex trade workers, exotic dancers or other things. They thought they were coming to be nannies and child care workers.”<sup>156</sup> MP Laurie Hawn made a similar comment:

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<sup>155</sup> Ms. Bell appears to be making an error here, there is no film called “The Natashas.” It is plausible that she is recalling a witness discussing Malarek’s book, which occurred twice during the sex trafficking study.

<sup>156</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10149 (Ms. Catherine Bell, NDP MP).



... I read a book a couple of years ago called *The Natashas*, by Victor Malarek, and I recommend it to my colleagues in the House. It addresses the topic of exploitation, slavery and so on ... I wonder if my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary, has any information on the gross numbers we are talking about, not just of strippers but of people overall who are being affected by the slave trade, the sex trade and the exploitation of young women in particular (Mr. Laurie Hawn, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 5 June 2007, 10180).

Malarek's work evidently had an enduring impact on parliamentarians and continued to inform how post-socialist women were understood.

Elsewhere, Hon. Helena Guergis re-introduced commentary given in 2005 by MP Pat Martin during debate on the human trafficking law, Bill C-49, to argue for the necessity of the proposed legislation to protect foreign workers. She repeated that "the door is still wide open for the type of wholesale exploitation that existed with the Eastern European dancers, and, in reality, the minister of immigration is still pimping for the underworld."<sup>157</sup> Associating narratives of the Romanian and Eastern European exotic dancers to the Natasha discourse, the post-socialist female subjects again acted as a referent for post-socialist sex trafficking.

During debate on Bill C-57, fears about sex trafficking became lodged in discourses of crime control. I explained above that the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation was proposed largely to address the trafficking of post-socialist exotic dancers. MP Ed Fast stated how:

The days of the Liberals' Strippergate scandal are over. Canadians were horrified when that scandal occurred. They asked

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<sup>157</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10153 (Hon. Helena Guergis, CPC MP).

how it could happen in a civilized country. Today we are closing the door on that.<sup>158</sup>

Parliamentarians, however, also invoked generalized fears of sex trafficking to justify need for the amendment. Joy Smith explained that, “There are criminals who are helping [potential victims of trafficking] get through the border and helping them answer questions correctly. When they get here they are taken into confinement and forced into the sex trade.”<sup>159</sup> Expressing related concerns, Fast stated how “we are dealing with pimps and traffickers who abuse human beings.”<sup>160</sup>

While Conservative parliamentarians couched the legislation in terms of responding to vulnerability and victimization – Fast stated that the legislation is “one small but significant response to the cry for help from the victims of trafficking”<sup>161</sup> – this “response” was understood in terms of controlling crime and preventing criminals from exploiting the Canadian immigration system. There was the notion that the immigration system was being used to exploit and victimize people.<sup>162</sup> Guergis explained that this proposed amendment would help to stop human trafficking by “ensuring the traffickers cannot exploit the hopes and dreams of those seeking a better life in Canada.”<sup>163</sup> Other parliamentarians expressed related concerns:

[Bill C-57] would help target networks that would profit from human trafficking. It would also stop the flow of individuals who are their prey and ultimate victims (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 5 June 2007, 10147).

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<sup>158</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10172 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP).

<sup>159</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10148 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).

<sup>160</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10172 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10135 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP); (5 June 2007), p. 10153 (Hon. Helena Guiegis, CPC MP) (5 June 2007).

<sup>163</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10153 (Hon. Helena Guergis, CPC MP).

[The amendment] would also strengthen our ability to protect the Canadian immigration system from being abused by traffickers and shady immigration consultants, who know that there are vulnerable victims around the world who can be abused, especially here in Canada (Mr. Ed Fast CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 5 June 2007, 10172).

Once again, as was seen in Malarek's testimony in Chapter 4, "stopping the flow" and limiting migrants' entry to Canada are linked to preventing trafficking.

Conservative Members of Parliament cited Stop the Trafficking Coalition's and The Future Group's positive responses to the proposed legislation.<sup>164</sup> Both organizations praised Bill C-57 for "protect[ing] vulnerable workers. Included in this are women that may be exploited as exotic dancers and forced to work as sex slaves"<sup>165</sup> and "tak[ing] an important step to protect women from sexual exploitation and end a program that made Canada complicit in human trafficking."<sup>166</sup>

As was seen during the Sgro scandal, in *The Natashas*, as well as in Malarek's testimony during the sex trafficking study, discourses of violence against women became intertwined with fears of immigration and the entry into Canada of undesirable migrants – whether victims or criminals. A slight shift in framing during Fast's speech raises questions about possible latent purposes of the legislation. He stated how "we as Canadians take pride in protecting the most vulnerable in our society ... and, yes, foreign workers who are being trafficked around the world, who want to come into Canada and

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<sup>164</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10134 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP); (5 June 2007), p.10139 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP) (5 June 2007); p .10172 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP); (5 June 2007), p.10179 (Colin Carrie, CPC MP).

<sup>165</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10134 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP).

<sup>166</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10135 (Mr. Ed Komarnicki, CPC MP).

ply their trade here.”<sup>167</sup> This comment, which appears to acknowledge some victims of trafficking as those who look to “ply their trade” in Canada, subtly signals the ongoing ambiguity about the culpability of victims.

The issue of post-socialist exotic dancers and sex trafficking was understood through the VAW paradigm and policy responses were framed as benevolent interventions. However, the proposed legislation sought to exclude potentially troublesome migrants from entering the national territory, which may be read as an anti-immigrant response. As much as fears of victimized white women conditioned the preoccupation with this group in Parliament, the policy response proposed looked to exclude exotic dancers from entry to Canada for their own good.

Concerns about controlling trafficking at the border and excluding potentially vulnerable and “at risk” migrants from entering Canada suggests that human trafficking policies may serve to protect whiteness by rejecting those who do not “measure up” to neoliberal middle class subjectivity or who are located outside of normative social and economic structures. In this manner, policies designed to address human trafficking in Canada may also function to protect Canada as a white nation by targeting avenues of migration where non-white, poorer, and persons marginalized within neoliberal capitalism may be more likely to be found. Rather than engage with difficult questions about the ways government policies facilitate the exploitation of workers, parliamentarians held up the bodies of the suffering female victims of trafficking to advocate for a proposal that would exclude non-Western female migrants from entering the national territory. A comment made during this debate, interestingly from MP Judy

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<sup>167</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p.10173 (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP).

Sgro, suggests simply that it is best for certain immigrants not to come to Canada:

We need to help countries like Romania and elsewhere, where there are a lot of issues, to make sure their economies are strong so their own residents are happy to stay there because they know they can raise a family and earn a good living. It is up to us to take care of our own issues and find our own labour workforce opportunities for people (Hon. Judy Sgro, Lib. MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 5 June 2007, 10152).

## **Conclusion**

There has been little examination of how the post-socialist context has been positioned within these debates on human trafficking policy within Canada. While post-socialist spaces have a significant presence within the data I analyzed, references to post-socialist and global South regions were sometimes made together; thus it is difficult to delineate precisely how the post-socialist was being conceptualized. However, there is enough in the data to be able to outline basic elements, which I propose form a specific narrative of alterity-making centering on post-socialist space: the positioning of white, post-socialist feminine subjects as victims; post-socialist space deemed dysfunctional or abject; and the positioning of post-socialist countries as exterior to the West and as a site of criminality. The connection that I would like to highlight here is that between the peripheralization of post-socialist spaces through their positioning as underdeveloped, non-Western, and dysfunctional, and articulations of Canadian nationalism in debates on human trafficking policies.

Parliamentarians, drawing on sentiments informed by practices of empire, positioned Canada as a saviour to victims of trafficking in underdeveloped countries. An element of this involved concerns about the treatment of women, whereby the Canadian

national community was positioned as modern, gender egalitarian and non-patriarchal in relation to other areas of the world that were seen to be traditional and lagging behind, including but not exclusively, Central and Eastern European countries. The way human trafficking was conceptualized incorporated nationalist understandings about the progressiveness of Canada and the national community, while unprogressive or “uncivilized” regions of the world were considered targets of practical, and possibly moral, intervention.

## Conclusion

I did not, at the outset of this study, seek to develop an analysis of the role whiteness plays in discourses on sex trafficking, particularly as popular contemporary representations of trafficking centre on youth, racialized, or Indigenous women. However, the level of concern directed toward post-socialist female subjects in government discourse in Canada, given the lack of empirical evidence and the relatively small number of potential victims, invites questions. Why was this matter so compelling? Why were post-socialist women of concern in debate over domestic law? Even if the legislation to protect foreign workers from legislation was not immediately passed, what was the motivation to repeatedly introduce the amendment though few dancers were coming to Canada? Vron Ware (1992) shows that white femininity is central to comprehending the harms of sexual violence from, in particular, racialized men. The data in this study suggest that concerns over victimized white femininity remain central to conceptualizing the harms of sex work and sex trafficking and to mobilizing institutional responses. In the historical narrative, the white slave figure represented a host of anxieties related to gender, sexuality, and migration (Doezema 2010; Valverde 1991). I argue that the post-socialist exotic dancer represented an reconfigured white slave figure in the Canadian context, carrying similar concerns.

In the government discourse explored in this study, concerns with respect to trafficking in persons were expressed through the notion of threats, often direct, from immigrants, criminals, and attendant worries over the safety of women and children. Consider Victor Malarek's fears about an "explosion" of foreign organized crime and trafficking if prostitution were legalized or Joy Smith's concerns about the sexual abuse of children and the recasting of "johns" as sexual predators and rapists.<sup>168</sup>

Other threats, however, speak to something more intangible, the existence of existential threats to "our" society and cherished collective values. These sentiments were clearest during the debate on the human trafficking law (C-49) in the House of Commons, where human trafficking came to be seen as an external threat attacking fundamental human rights, freedoms, and Canadian civilization itself. Abject subjects, states, and processes appear with frequency in discourses of sex trafficking (i.e. victims, prostitutes, sexual violence, oppression, exploitation, sexual predators). McClintock (1995) explains that repudiated groups and processes are expelled from the self as threatening and dangerous. Calls to respond to human trafficking with harsher laws, to stop trafficking at the border, and to criminalize the purchase of sex and imposing more surveillance over markets in sexual labour, all occurring during the period examined in this study, support McClintock's observation that such repudiated and threatening aspects of life are policed with rigour.

McClintock's situating of psychoanalysis to material history links the expulsion of abject subjects and processes to broader political and economic issues. Relating her insights and those of Goldberg (2009) to this study, the rejection of "unruly" groups who

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<sup>168</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5872 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).



threaten accumulation, the orderly operation of the neoliberal state, or the safety and security of the domestic population’ (2009, 334) highlight the linkage between abject subjects and geopolitics.<sup>169</sup> Human trafficking policies may serve to protect whiteness by rejecting those who cannot embody neoliberal bourgeois subjectivity or who are located at the borders of normative social and economic structures.

The concerns linked to human trafficking within government discourse examined in this dissertation support Goldberg’s (2009) theorization that the reactions of the neoliberal state to managing heterogeneous populations can be seen as responses to the “impending impotence of whiteness” (2009, 337). The analysis presented in this study shows how concerns about sex trafficking have been mapped onto geopolitical concerns, particularly fears of immigration and transnational organized crime. There is the sense, throughout government discourse, of impending threats from all directions and that Canada and the West’s privileged position with the global hierarchy must be fiercely guarded against.

The mainstream anti-human trafficking movement has long disengaged from the early concerns of Third World and woman of colour feminist activists about social and economic justice for women and congealed into a state-centred, anti-trafficking infrastructure wielding exclusionary and carceral powers (Bernstein 2010; 2012). There has been a tendency among sex worker advocates to indict radical feminism for the enactment of laws that penalize prostitution (for example, van der Meulen, Durisin, and

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<sup>169</sup> There was an additional amendment, a change in language, in the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation. There was the inclusion of the word “public” to the existing legislation and, in the context of the legislation, “aim[ed] to protect *public* health and safety and to maintain the security of Canadian society” (Canada 2007b, 8).

Love 2013). This tendency is not unwarranted, as one of the novel developments in prostitution law reform in Europe and Canada has been the inclusion of women in positions of power expressing concerns about prostitution as a form of violence against women (Mattson 2016). For instance, MP Maria Mourani's claim that prostitution leads to gender inequality<sup>170</sup> or MP Lynn Yelich's speech supporting a VAW framing of prostitution that drew directly on radical feminist Donna Hughes.<sup>171</sup>

While the VAW paradigm is present within government discourse, the data do not suggest that the installation of some feminist ideas in the policymaking process is evidence of the success of radical feminism within policymaking spheres in Canada. This study suggests that sex worker advocates and academic allies – perhaps as a result of engagement in protracted debates with radical feminists over prostitution – have not fully explored the usefulness of discourses on sex trafficking to neoliberal state projects, accumulation, nor sufficiently explored relationships between policies on human trafficking and concerns to protect Canada as a white nation. This project, then, seeks to encourage theorization into these other directions.

This study presents three central and interrelated arguments. The first relates to the role of ethnosexualized post-socialist female subjects in sex trafficking discourses in Canada. I argue that concerns about harms to white femininity remain central to contemporary fears about trafficking in women in Canada, and that the post-socialist female subject can be thought of as a reconfigured white slave. Fears about violation of white femininity speak to an enduring desire to protect the whiteness of the nation linking historical and contemporary discourses. The violence experienced by Central and Eastern

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<sup>170</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5875 (Mrs. Maria Mourani, BQ MP).

<sup>171</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 8029 (Mrs. Lynne Yelich, CP MP).

European women was of concern to the Canadian state as their whiteness positioned them as potential members of the nation and likewise as legitimate victims worthy of protection.

The second argument this study puts forward is how post-socialist women's vulnerability to sexual harm became conceptualized was in relation to threats posed by foreign criminals or foreign values; the fear of threats legitimated extensions of state power in the form of intensified criminal and immigration regulations. It is not uncommon for concerns over harm to white women to translate into repressive policy responses (Ware 1992, 8). Thus, in the Canadian context, there is an interconnection between discourses on VAW and fears of immigrants in particular, and such concerns are linked to carceral responses. This study suggests that the state-centred solutions to sex trafficking, such as strengthening immigration officers' abilities to deny migrants entry to Canada or intensifying criminal sanctions for human trafficking, protect the whiteness of the Canadian nation by targeting sites where groups who threaten the state or bourgeois class interests are more likely to be found.

The last argument relates to contemporary relationship between nationalism and sexuality. Government discourse shows a Canadian sexualized nationalism where Canadian progressiveness and civilizational superiority is linked to a gender egalitarian enlightened masculinity, where the Canadian national subject is seen as having surpassed the patriarchal tendencies of subaltern males, and where commercial sex is an activity coded as incongruent with Canadian values. The commercial sexual encounter was cast as harmful to women and indicative of gender inequality. This has the effect of shoring up the ideological power of the patriarchal family as the foundation of the nation, and

insulating the family against charges of patriarchal violence or oppression. Thus, contemporary discourses on sex trafficking espouse a conservative sexual politics that is in alignment with shifts in neoliberal sexual politics identified by Bernstein (2010, 2012).

### **The Natasha Discourse, White Slavery, and Fears of Victimized White Femininity**

The data suggest that the Natasha discourse emerged as a version of the white slavery narrative adapted to contemporary conditions. The significance of bringing this history to bear on the contemporary Canadian debate on sex trafficking is related to nineteenth-century interests in empire building, nationalism, and fears threats to white female bodies (Doezema 2000; Valverde 1991). While parliamentarians in Canada justified the need for more laws targeting human trafficking – particularly sex trafficking – by appealing to fears about sexual harms to vulnerable women and children, scholarship on the historical white slavery narrative demands that attention be paid to the nefarious concerns that have given form to discourses of trafficking in women over time.

Victor Malarek played a significant role during 2005 – 2007 shaping this understanding in government discourse. I argue that Malarek's influence worked to position post-socialist female subjects in the governmental context through constructs of white femininity, that is, through notions of purity, innocence, and beauty. As such, race played an important role in establishing legitimate victimhood and in perceiving the harms of sex trafficking.

In government discourse, the sex trafficking of Central and Eastern European women was described as white slavery and sexual slavery and appeals to their desperate and impoverished conditions were used to render them as innocents. It was their

ethnicized whiteness that enabled them to be rendered as particularly vulnerable women in a manner denied to Western bourgeois female subjects in contemporary times. This reflects the notion, identified by Andrijasevic (2010) and Koobak and Marling (2014), of the post-socialist being positioned “behind” the West. This is evident, for instance, in Senator Andreychuk’s speech in support of the human trafficking law in 2005 when she commented on post-socialist women’s naïve fear of authority.<sup>172</sup> Post-socialist female subjects were rendered as uniquely vulnerable white women in need of protection who could be easily inserted into a white slavery narrative adapted to contemporary geopolitical conditions.

Despite the salience of victimized white femininity to conceptualizing the threats of sex trafficking, the post-socialist victim of trafficking was also positioned in contradictory ways within Canadian government discourse. Her location in race and class hierarchies was that of a less privileged, ethnicized form of white identity. While violence against her was visible and a cause for concern owing to the valorization of her white body, questions about her culpability were never fully foreclosed because of her class positioning and her linkage to foreign post-socialist male criminality. At various times she was seen contemptuously as a prostitute, immigration cheat, or undesirable immigrant. These ungenerous renderings do not challenge the argument that she was rendered as an updated white slave figure, as the historical white slave was likewise an ambiguous figure.

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<sup>172</sup> Canada, *Senate Debates* (1 November 2005), p. 2038 (Hon. A. Raynell Andreychuk).

## Discourses on Violence Against Women and Anti-immigrant Sentiment

During debate on the human trafficking law in 2005, imperialistic rhetorics of sex trafficked victims and Canadian saviours was often heard, and the suffering body of the sex trafficked post-socialist Natasha was employed to justify the need for the new law. Debate on sex trafficking marshaled anxieties about sexual harms and drove them toward punitive state responses. After quoting a passage from Malarek's *The Natashas*, Vic Toews stated that "the only thing that will send these thugs scurrying back into the rat holes is the full force of the law — unwavering prosecution, heavy prison time and confiscation of all profits amassed on the backs of these women."<sup>173</sup> In 2007, during debate on the motion to condemn international sex trafficking, similar sentiments were express by Ed Fast:

We need tougher prison sentences. We need stricter enforcement, and better investigation and monitoring. Criminals need to know that if they traffic in human beings, punishment will be swift and certain (Mr. Ed Fast, CPC MP, *House of Commons Debates*. Canada, 22 February 2007, 7231).

Alongside discourses on violence against women in debate involving international sex trafficking were discourses on crime control, such as the "tough on crime" approach above.

Testimony given during the sex trafficking study in 2006 and during debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation in 2007 suggest that responses to sex trafficking may not necessarily constitute responses to violence against women even while they were seen as vehicles for gender justice. Government debate on policy responses that mobilized fears of sexual harm was lodged in fears about threats and

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<sup>173</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (26 September 2005), p. 7990 (Mr. Vic Toews, CPC MP).

criminality of immigrants to which changes to criminal and immigration regulations, such as denying work permits, criminalizing human trafficking, or harsher sentencing, were proposed.

In his testimony to the sex trafficking study, Victor Malarek's concerns about prostitution being a form of women's oppression were expressed through fears of immigrants to Canada and the criminality they would bring with them. Post-socialist criminality and dysfunction was a theme introduced by other witnesses as well. However, it was debate on the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation that this link was made in terms of a policy proposal. The victimization of sex trafficked exotic dancers was a key concern, and parliamentarians legitimated the need for the amendment through appealing to fears about protecting the immigration system from those who sought to abuse it.

The linkage between protecting women from harm and exclusionary public policies was made more explicit in 2010 when the above legislation had been renamed the Preventing the Trafficking, Abuse and Exploitation of Vulnerable Immigrants Act and its rationale refashioned to be more explicitly linked to protecting girls and women. MPs Rosa Ambrose and Joy Smith explained that it is meant to "preclude situations in which women might be exploited or become victims of human trafficking" (Canada 2011, 4) and to protect the dignity of girls and women (Ibid.).

Despite the discussion about protecting women from harm, the debate surrounding earlier versions of the legislation appeared to be more concerned with increasing control over who is permitted entry into Canada. In looking back to the debate during the Sgro scandal in 2004, parliamentarians' ungenerous treatment and anti-

immigrant hostility toward Romanian dancers before they had been positioned as victims of trafficking may be instructive. Discourses on VAW may also have been used to achieve what states have often been interested to accomplish, which is excluding foreign prostitutes (as criminals) from the national territory (Luibhéid 2002; Valverde 1991). Calls to protect women from harm ran alongside hostility to immigrants who were seen to threaten the well-being of the nation. Judy Sgro's endorsement of the legislation to protect foreign workers from exploitation, quoted in Chapter 6, is telling. She stated that 'Canada needs to help countries like Romania, to ensure their citizens as happy to remain there.'<sup>174</sup> The message is quite clear: do not bring your problems to Canada.

### **A New (Gender Egalitarian) National Family: Canadian Sexualized Nationalism and Masculinity**

As noted in Chapter 3, Benjamin Perrin played an influential role in Canada's anti-trafficking infrastructure. In Perrin's *Invisible Chains* (2010), there appear to be few threats that cannot be linked in one way or another to human trafficking. Marriage and the family are so shielded from accusations of gender oppression that instances of abuse in intimate relationships is seen as a type of trafficking in women (see page 80, for example) rather than the more mundane domestic violence that it may be more appropriately labeled.<sup>175</sup> The racial coding evident throughout Perrin's writing positioning racialized men as exploiters speaks to ongoing fears about subaltern men as sexual and criminal threats that have historically been central concerns in narratives of trafficking in women in Canada (Valverde 1991).

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<sup>174</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (5 June 2007), p. 10152 (Hon. Judy Sgro, Lib. MP).

<sup>175</sup> Perrin blames the "traffic" on bad men that often carries deep racial connotations about the sexual depravity of subaltern male subjects. The suggestion in Perrin is that the "right" kind of men would not be implicated in such violence that is the domain of less evolved forms of masculinity.



Perrin's approach shares similarities with that of Malarek in *The Natashas*. Both Perrin and Malarek appear in their writing as good Canadian men, "white knights" embarking on liberal rescue fantasies. In the Preface of *Invisible Chains*, Perrin describes his decision to support anti-trafficking efforts in Cambodia through volunteer work abroad – arrived at while spending a pleasant evening with friends at cottage in Muskoka, Ontario – and his subsequent commitment to ending human trafficking in Canada and internationally. He relays his experiences posed as a sex tourist to investigate brothels in Phnom Penh. However, in Perrin's writing unlike Malarek's, the bonds are no longer matters of physical force, but have become invisible: "the psychological power of the trafficker is rooted not in the victim's seeking to protect herself from physical harm but rather in her attempt to fulfill an emotional need" (Perrin 2010, 80). The title of his text, *Invisible Chains*, speaks to his intervention into dominant trafficking discourse; there are constraints that cannot be seen but are rather states of the mind.

Malarek's early concerns regarding domestic human trafficking during his testimony to the sex trafficking study in 2006 foresaw later discursive shifts and the move to fears over domestic human trafficking present in Perrin's work. In Perrin's writing, sex purchasers are Canadian men who have been "induced to feel that it would be pleasurable to *pay* a stranger for sex" (2010, 161) and for whom "sexual behaviour becomes a transaction like any other, devoid of intimacy" (Ibid., 167). He describes the "collateral damage" to families, wives (who predictably contract STIs) and children, and argues that sex purchasers must be seen as "morally responsible for the suffering of their victims as are the traffickers who meet their demand" (Ibid., 161). Perrin, like Malarek, assumes the

posture of the ethical national masculine subject, for whom sex and intimacy are bound and espouses the same conservative sexual politics as Malarek.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, men, masculinity, and nation have a unique symbolic relation to one another. McClintock (1995) contends that all nationalism is gendered and explains that, during the period of empire, the patriarchal family image has been projected onto national and imperial progress, with women and children being subordinated to their paternal husbands and fathers (1995, 45). For McClintock, the hierarchy of the family was naturalized and seen as an element of historical progress.

Within government discourses on sex trafficking, a form of Canadian nationalism centering on the protection of women and children shaped notions of a national, enlightened masculinity that was gender egalitarian and seen as progressive. The understanding that developed during debate on the human trafficking law saw the presence of trafficking in persons as linked to values that were inferior to Canadian sensibilities surrounding justice and morality, especially patriarchal attitudes that legitimated violence against women. Through the idea that prostitution was harmful to women and indicative of gender oppression, it became possible to make the assertion, noted earlier, that buying sex is not a Canadian value and to assert the superior values of Canadian national subjects. The Canadian male subject supports women's equality, whereas patriarchy and misogyny are the domains of the ethnicized or racialized man. In this study I show, however, that such ideas have geopolitical dimensions and speak to fears of less progressive forms of masculinity being incorporated into the national community through foreign intruders threatening to infect the nation with un-Canadian values.

Calls to criminalize the purchase of sex have their genealogy in Swedish ideas about the client as a particular type of maladjusted man that are related to official discourses on gender parity and its centrality to Swedish national identity (Kulick 2005). The purchase of sexual services was pathologized in the Canadian context by individuals such as Victor Malarek (2003), Maria Mourani, Benjamin Perrin (2006), and Joy Smith. Kulick (2005) and Bernstein (2012) explain that the securitization of men's sexuality within the emotionally-bound relationship is grounded in notions about gender equality. Despite the feminist language of gender equality, men's behaviour is imagined as a progressive agent of modernity that, according to McClintock, has been the position historically bestowed to white, national (European) men (1995, 360).

It is not surprising, then, that the client became recast as a repository for some of the most objectionable forms of sexual harm, rape and child sexual abuse. In a speech in support of the motion to condemn international sex trafficking, Joy Smith argued that we “need to deal with the clients, the men who go after the market to rape young girls” and offered up “machoness,” that trait of undomesticated masculinity, to explain this violent behaviour.<sup>176</sup> Smith's use of “machoness,” a word conveying a form of aggressive, assertive masculinity, mirrors the type of problematic masculinity of East European criminals in *The Natashas* or of young racialized men in *Invisible Chains*.

Though positioning Canada as a leader in the fight against human trafficking and the Canadian male subject as the possessor of an enlightened masculinity, the Canadian state and national community appears as a white knight in the struggle against the threats and problems unleashed by globalization. In this reconfigured national family, the

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<sup>176</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (8 December 2006), p. 5872 (Mrs. Joy Smith, CPC MP).

national subject remains the protector of women while being steadfast about women's equality as demonstrated through gender egalitarianism and commitment to an emotion-based sexual ethic. The valorization of middle class familial and sexual norms and concomitant insulation of marriage and the family from accusations of gender oppression parades as gender egalitarianism but is disengaged from any sort of feminist analysis.

In reflecting on the relevance of the conclusions I have arrived at, I will return to where I began in the Introduction with the contemporary migration crisis. Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira write that the “killing of those at the margins of liberal and neoliberal sovereignty continues to be glamourized and fetishized in the name of ‘democracy,’ we are confronted with urgent questions about the ways in which life, death, and desire are being (re)constituted in the current political moment” (2008, 120). In reading this quote, it is difficult not to be reminded of the thousands of migrants who have died crossing the Mediterranean Sea in recent years beside the unsettling reality of rising white supremacist political activity in Europe and North America. Alongside this, members of privileged classes are seduced into experiencing ourselves as saviours as our governments fight terrorism and human trafficking, and because of the powerful belief that our values are right and just.

This study illustrates the troubling way in which concerns over violence against women, force, and enslavement become mobilized to protect the interests of the neoliberal state and bourgeois class. Critical scholars have highlighted the troubling symbiosis between the global fight against human trafficking and state interests to control migration; Nandita Sharma (2005) has described this in terms of “global apartheid.” The study, however, suggests going one step further. The mainstream anti-trafficking

infrastructure (and accompanying activism) could be seen as central to maintaining white supremacy by couching justification for violence and exclusion in terms palatable to liberal subjects and that satisfy the imperial “helping imperative” (Heron 2007). There are worthwhile questions to be asked about the extent to which the anti-trafficking infrastructure protects bourgeois interests but also reproduces white subjects, those who know themselves to be right, feel empowered to solve the world’s problems, and understand their activities through emancipatory discourses on victims and saviours.

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