

**Negotiating Souls For Lives:
The Situations of Filipina Women in The
Sex Tourism Industry**

By

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Abstract

This research examines the lives and conditions of women involved in sex tourism and prostitution in the Philippines, based primarily on the voices and opinions of these women. In order to examine sex tourism and prostitution in the Philippines, this thesis examines the history of the Philippines in order to emphasize the macro and micro level factors that have sustained and supported the exploitation of women in sex tourism and prostitution. This thesis examines the actors in the trade of prostitution, including the prostituted women, sex tourists, business owners and the government. The roles the actors play in the sex trade as well as the benefits and consequences of each group will be explored as well as the women's opinions regarding the sex actors and the industry as a whole. This thesis explores sex tourism through the roles of sex tourism actors in order to highlight women's voices as well as the exploitation that women are exposed to for the benefit of sex tourists, business owners and operators, and various levels of government.

Negotiating Souls for Lives: The Situations of Filipino Women in the Sex Tourism Industry

Chapter One

Introduction.....	p. 1
Purpose.....	p. 3
My Internship.....	p. 4
Research Methods.....	p. 6
Interviewing.....	p. 7
Ethnographic Experiences and Observations.....	p. 10
Secondary Research.....	p. 11
Confidentiality of Participants.....	p. 12
Minimizing Hierarchies	p. 13
Positionality- Where Do/Did I Stand?.....	p. 15

Chapter Two

Linking Prostitution and Sex Tourism With The Past.....	p. 18
The Early Years.....	p. 19
The Twentieth Century Begins.....	p. 23
Searching For Economic Strategies: International Tourism.....	p. 28
The Switch From Military Prostitution to Sex Tourism.....	p. 33
Diversifying The Sex Tourism Market.....	p. 34

Chapter Three

The Customers: International Sex Tourists.....	p. 39
Race and Gender: The Exotic ‘Other’.....	p. 40
Who Are The Customers?.....	p. 46
The Mental Musings of Sex Tourists.....	p. 48
Class: The Multi-Purpose Nature of Poverty.....	p. 51
Sex Tourists: The Customers, The ‘Victims’.....	p. 54
An Invisible Network.....	p. 58
Sex Tourism Business Class.....	p. 62

Chapter Four

Women in The Entertainment Industry.....	p. 66
Women, Economics and Their Families.....	p. 66
Searching For Work.....	p. 72
Working in the Entertainment Industry	p. 77
The Effects of Working in The Entertainment Industry.....	p. 81
Conflicting Identities.....	p. 83
Prostituted Women and Sex Actors.....	p. 89
Bar Management Personnel.....	p. 90
Sex Tourists.....	p. 95
The Local Government.....	p. 98
The Concept of Choice.....	p. 102
Hopes For The Future.....	p. 103

Chapter Five

Conclusion.....	p. 106
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Terminology.....	p. 112
Interview Survey.....	p. 116
Bibliography.....	p. 118

Chapter One:

Introduction

Part of me doesn't want to be here and screams inside. How can I be working in a bar? This is not who I am. This is not me. But the other part of me knows that I am here for my children. I would do anything for my children. So there is two of me inside, two values.

Sally is a beautiful, intelligent woman. At twenty-three years of age, she is the mother of two. She grew up in the province of Negros, comes from a large family, is devotedly Catholic, and she is a prostitute. She works in the sex tourism district in Angeles City, Philippines. Sally is in a similar situation to thousands of Filipina women, feeling trapped with no place to turn.

Sally wants to leave the bar scene before her daughter is old enough to understand her employment. She does not want her daughter to be exposed to this life; she wants to keep her away from it all. She has been applying for jobs in the duty free zone set up in the former American Clark Air force military base, but the competition is tough. Perhaps if she had finished her education she would have more of a chance. She regrets dropping out of school when she became pregnant with her first child but at the time she had a stable life and she never dreamed she would be living the life in which she now exists. Though her options are bleak, she continues to try to find a means of escape from the bars.

In the meantime, she continues to work in the bars to support her family and she has been able to save some money. Someday she hopes to be able to

return to the province with her children and open a dress shop as her mother did.

Until that time, she has to continue to struggle.

I don't want to work in the bar, and this bothers me. But then I think, 'I am doing this for my family, to support my children'. Then I stop thinking.... I have to stop thinking; I would go crazy. So I concentrate on my children.

Thousands of women work in the 'entertainment' (a euphemism for the sex trade) or sex tourism industry in the Philippines to meet the sexual needs of foreign, relatively rich (typically), white, middle-aged men. The streets are lined with bars, karaokes, massage parlours and other similar establishments. In the evening, the neon lights flash while the beats of various songs vibrate in the air. Women stand alongside the bars in revealing outfits while calling out to passers-by, enticing the tourists to drop in. Inside one finds the commodification of sexuality in general and of women's bodies in particular.

The vast majority of the women (and children) working in the entertainment industry are trapped in a cycle of poverty, creating a situation in which women are easily manipulated and exploited in order to meet the needs of the government, the business class (both local and foreign) and the sex clients. The exploitation of Filipinas through sex tourism has been caused by a long history of sexual oppression, deeply entrenched gender roles and foreign influences that have created a niche in which Filipinas are caught between conflicting dichotomies, responsibilities and (as Sally pointed out) values.

Angeles City, the former site of the United States Clark Air Force Base, had long been known for military prostitution; however, the area has since

switched its emphasis to international sex tourism. Though prostitution is technically illegal in the Philippines, the government has come to rely heavily on the continued growth in sex tourism and the associated foreign currency that sex tourism earns, and thus on the exploitation of young women employed and/or entrapped in the sex tourism industry.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore the increasingly oppressive circumstances of women working in the sex tourism industry in Angeles City, Philippines, through an examination of macro and micro factors that have both shaped and been shaped by the historical conditions of gender roles, sexuality and the increasingly international economic pursuits of the nation. The heightened levels of exploitation of women by sex tourism will be explored by incorporating the voices and experiences of prostituted women into an examination of local, national and international factors and the social contexts of prostitution and sex tourism in the Philippines. In conducting this research, I wanted to analyse the situations and experiences of the women with whom I conversed and compare their individual situations with the macro and micro factors that sustain and support prostitution and international sex tourism, to determine whether these factors support or contradict the women's testimony.

In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, Cynthia Enloe explores the four conditions necessary for sex tourism to flourish: 1.) women are in economically and socially deprived conditions; 2.) governments are in pursuit of a new

strategy to gain foreign currency and related economic benefits; 3.) men are in affluent positions to be able and willing to travel; and, 4.) there is a local and/or foreign business class to promote and sustain sex tourism industries.¹ This research concentrates on how these requisite conditions were developed to create and promote the current situation in Angeles City, and explain how the exploitation of Filipinas continues to grow. Cynthia Enloe's categorization of sex tourism actors is utilized extensively in this thesis as it provides the framework in order to examine the actors of sex tourism in Angeles City, and it also provides a lens by which to explore the sex actors through the experiences of the prostituted women.

My Internship

My interest in researching prostitution in the Philippines developed largely from my participation in the Youth International Internship Programme (YIIP), funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and facilitated by Saint Mary's University. Originally a six-month contract, I stayed in the Philippines from August 2001- May 2002, mostly in Angeles City and Manila. My host organisation was Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organisation, Inc (WEDPRO), a local, non-governmental organisation (NGO) working with and for prostituted women in the Philippines. WEDPRO is a small, multi-tasked organisation that attempts to

¹ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 36.

improve the lives of women involved, or vulnerable to becoming involved, in prostitution. WEDPRO seeks to improve the lives of these women through judicial change, local research, community and national education programmes, lobbying and participating in health and well-being projects. In conducting research and community development initiatives, WEDPRO's mission is:

(T)o facilitate the creation of enabling conditions for women from vulnerable and exploited sectors to be empowered and assert their self determination...WEDPRO believes that empowerment and equality for women and similarly disadvantaged sectors can only come about when they participate and share in the social, cultural, political and economic development in Philippine society.²

Upon arrival in the Philippines, my job description within the NGO had yet to be established and I was given time to adjust, acclimatize, and develop a greater understanding of sex tourism and prostitution in the country. It was then decided that one of my main responsibilities would be to interview prostituted women in the 'entertainment' industry in the sex tourism district. I worked with the Executive Director of WEDPRO, Maria Dulce Natividad, on preparing the topics of interest as well as the interview questions. Before the formal interviewing process began, I informally interviewed and conversed with entertainers to determine relevant issues, concerns and experiences to explore in the formal interview. The informal interviews and conversations I participated in further aided in establishing appropriate language usages such as common slang or Tagalog expressions and colloquialisms.

As I continued my informal interviewing, while fulfilling daily responsibilities and participating in community life in the Philippines, I

² *Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization, Inc.: A Profile* (Information Pamphlet, unpublished, 2002).

increasingly thought of returning to university to complete a Master of Arts. I spoke with Ms. Natividad about the possibility of using the information I would be gathering in an MA thesis, to which she consented. When the formal interviewing process commenced, the women I interviewed were informed and consented to the possibility that the collected data would be used for two papers. The collection of data in the formal interviews with prostituted women was therefore gathered with two purposes in mind; all parties involved were made aware and consented to that possibility. Upon completion of the interviewing process, I compiled the results in a working paper entitled Taking Flight With Broken Wings: The Angels of The Entertainment Industry (Experiences and Opinions of the Entertainment Workers of Angeles City, Philippines).

Research Methods

This research relies on a multiplicity of primary and secondary research methods. The primary research methods utilised provides the framework for an analysis of sex tourism and prostitution on a local (and more personal) level while secondary research was primarily used to tie in the national and international factors. For the purposes of this thesis, I have adopted two primary methods of research, coupling formal interviews of entertainers with my personal observations and experiences through ethnographic study and participating in community life. By coupling these methods with secondary research, both the personal and political conditions and consequences of sex

tourism have been linked to bring about a more integrated and comprehensive understanding of sex tourism and prostitution.

Though I rely on a multiplicity of research methods, in my opinion, interviewing women was the single most important research method I utilized to gain a better understanding of the situations in Angeles. I utilize women's voices to illustrate prostitution from a local, personal level. As is demonstrated in feminist literature, the personal is political.³ What at first seems personal is often political in nature as many of the women's experiences are interconnected with local, national and international forums.

Interviewing "offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher."⁴ The prostituted women I interviewed are the experts in their own lives and experiences; these women have lived their experiences, they have stories which have shaped and continue to shape their lives and they have taken the time to share their opinions with me. Interviewing is important to this research not only because of the experiences they have shared but also because much of their experiences will be shared using their own words.

(a.) Interviewing

The formal data was accumulated between the months of November 2001 and February 2002 using random and snowball strategies. The data collection

³ Judith Stacey, "Can There Be A Feminist Ethnography?," in *Women's Word's: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, eds., Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 111.

⁴ Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 19.

involved various strategies, gathered either by structured or semi-structured interviews, through the use of an interview questionnaire. My interviews consisted of mostly open-ended questions concerning their experiences, backgrounds, opinions and future dreams. Most of the women interviewed worked on Fields Avenue in Balibago (a barrio within Angeles City) but some of the participants worked in Crossing, an area located near downtown Angeles. Some women were interviewed once, while others were seen several times to complete or enhance details of the research. Fifteen women were formally interviewed using the interview survey. Throughout this research, the use of statistics of women working in the bars refers only to the fifteen women I formally interviewed.

While conducting the interview survey, I did not have access to a tape recorder and therefore relied on recording notes with pen and paper. As such, most of the interview answers were compiled with the information given without benefit of verbatim responses. However, there were key questions within the interview survey that I was especially interested in and thus took verbatim responses through the utilization of shorthand writing. The inserted quotes by prostituted women are the responses to these key questions, which I had identified as the most important to the research.

The venues for interviewing participants were the WEDPRO Angeles Field Office, the Social Hygiene Clinic, homes of the women or their friends and the bars. Most interviews were conducted in English, as the women in the bars usually speak English fluently (due to their clientele). However, some

interviews were conducted with the aid of an interpreter (various people were utilized for this purpose), either in Kapampangan (the provincial language) or Tagalog (the national language).

Difficulties in conducting the research ranged from the length of the interview survey, the turnover of women working in the bars as well as the sometimes-conflicting schedules of the women, the host organisation and myself. At times, language differences also served as a research barrier. However, as a female foreigner, I had an easier time gaining access to the women than I had anticipated. I was neither the norm (Filipino) nor a potential customer (typically white men) and thus I was easily recognisable and seen as a curiosity. This curiosity factor allowed me easier access than what is typically available to Filipino NGOs. Filipino women (and often men) are denied access to the bars in the sex tourism district. As this restriction was not placed on me, I was able to converse and get to know women working in the bars in a much wider setting. In learning about and getting to know women who worked in the bars, I attempted to interact with them in their own environments. The access granted to me as a foreign female allowed me access into the bars, the women's quarters and their living spaces (this was a first in WEDPRO's research history as access is typically denied to all but the bar women). This will be discussed below.

(B.) Ethnographic Experiences and Observations

Though I collected formal data from the interviewing process, I also gathered a lot of information through informal conversations, observations, insights and experiences I shared in the Philippines. My informal experiences were documented through the use of a journal; these experiences and observations provide a local context to prostitution and sex tourism. Informally, I spoke with more than one hundred women, to varying degrees. I spoke with some women at length while others I asked only a few questions. This depended on time restrictions and the research stage. Informal conversations served as a comparison to the formal information I gathered as well as a means to personal education.

While staying in Angeles City, I lived two blocks from Fields Avenue, the focal point of the sex tourism district. As a member of the community, I shared in 'regular' everyday experiences through my daily routines. As much as possible, I would spend time at the same places as many of the prostituted women. Through participant observation, I learned about the daily lives of the women who work in the bars, such as how they spend their days, how they divide their time, and the activities they are involved in both inside and outside the bars. Especially important within participant observation was learning about the formal and informal networks women in the bars utilise for information and support.

During my internship with WEDPRO, I had extensive conversations with the different actors in the sex tourism district. My conversations ranged from

talking with women in the bars, the customers, the Mamasans (the women's bar manager), the managers and owners of the bars (typically foreign owned and run) as well as people in NGOs, the Philippine National Police and people in the wider community who live and work near the sex tourism district. Though it is not my intention to focus on any one conversation or experience, the combined conversations I had with various actors in sex tourism revealed patterns in various groups' ideologies, perspectives, reasoning and desires. These tendencies or trends reveal the patterned justifications of various groups in the ways they attempt to justify the exploitation of Filipinas, and expose a greater understanding of the different actors working within the sex tourism district.

(C.) Secondary Research

While the primary research was utilised to examine the local situations and individual perceptions of prostitution and sex tourism, the secondary research provided a historical framework from a national and international perspective. Secondary resources are utilised in order to examine the levels of exploitation and the trends within sex tourism so as to serve as a basis of comparison. This basis of comparison between the levels of exploitation experienced by prostituted women is strengthened by utilising the past research performed by WEDPRO and other Filipino NGOs in an attempt to track the increases or decreases in exploitative trends in the entertainment industry. While WEDPRO has performed extensive research on the lives and situations of women in the entertainment industry, most of the research was undertaken in the mid 1990s

and earlier.⁵ Thus, the research I have conducted has offered a fresh perspective for a basis of comparison so as to have a more complete understanding of the situational levels of exploitation affecting women working in the bars.

Confidentiality of Participants

Throughout this research I have focused on the importance of confidentiality. In order to protect the identities of research participants, I have concentrated on ensuring that there will be no possibility of recognition and that the descriptions used could in no way lead to identification of participants.

Most of the women working in Angeles bars do not use their real names; they have adopted pseudonyms to protect their identity from family members and friends. I have assigned an additional pseudonym to protect the women from people they come in contact with in Angeles City, including the bar owners and managers. In addition to this, unless the women are from Angeles City, they are identified as coming from a region instead of the particular city or town. I have taken similar measures with other actors of the sex trade, assigning them with pseudonyms. In addition, the photographs I utilize throughout the thesis have been adjusted to conceal the faces of the participants.

⁵ *From Manila, Angeles and Olongapo to Cebu and Davao: The Continuing Lives of Women in the 'Entertainment' Industry* (Quezon City: WEDPRO, 1994); Lee, Lynn. *From Carriers to Communities: Alternative Employment, Economic Livelihood and Human Resource Development for Women in the Entertainment Industry* (Manila: WEDPRO, 1992).

From informal conversations I have had with entertainers, I am also confident that when speaking of circumstances of their lives, these details are not specific or unique enough to identify the participants from hundreds of other entertainers in very similar circumstances. My goal is to be able to bring out the women's voices and to highlight their specific experiences to demonstrate the overall situation of women in the entertainment industry in Angeles City. Personal situations have therefore been kept vague enough that participants will lack distinguishing features that may separate them from other entertainers.

Minimizing Hierarchies

Minimizing hierarchies was an essential concern and goal while I was conducting my research; some methods worked better than others and with some individuals than others. However, the existence of hierarchies remained a salient factor regardless of the attempts and small successes I achieved. One of my main goals was to get information out to the women, such as information regarding the services that the Women Helping Women Centre was offering as well as information on services offered by other NGOs. In this goal, I believe that I succeeded. Though my interview sample was fairly small, I spoke with well over one hundred prostituted women and let them know of the services and programmes available to them. While I never discovered a 'tried and true' method of reducing hierarchies, I was always well aware of the power

discrepancies that existed between the women in the entertainment industry and myself.

One method I utilized extensively while conducting interviews was the act of self-disclosure. Whenever I spoke with women for any great period of time, information was shared in a reciprocal nature. Contrary to traditional research methods, I strongly felt that self-disclosure was the most appropriate method to adopt in this research. Shulamit Reinharz, a feminist researcher interested in feminist methods, insists that “(s)elf disclosure initiates ‘true dialogue’ by allowing participants to become ‘co-researchers.’” Whether I was conducting a formal interview or simply chitchatting with the women, personal and intimate topics were often discussed. While I told the women that I was simply there to learn, it was clear that the women had as strong a desire to learn about and from me as I had from and about them. Due to the fact that I was asking very personal questions concerning their lives, I felt it only right to honestly answer questions that were just as personal about my own life. I believe that self-disclosure was highly beneficial to both myself and the research participants as the conversations we participated in seemed to be much more natural, aided in establishing an additional level of trust and comfort, and increased the level of conversational satisfaction.

Positionality- Where Do/Did I Stand?

Research is directly affected by the discrepancies in power between the researcher and participants. Issues of gender, race, class and (to a smaller degree) age in comparison to the research participants directly affected the interviews I conducted; however, it is my opinion that my positionality aided in the research in contrast to hampering these endeavours. In my opinion, the connection of my gender (female), race (White) and class (shifting from lower-middle class in Canada to upper middle class in developing countries) combined to maximize research possibilities in the Philippines. I believe that this ‘comparative advantage’ was maximized through my personal desires to achieve a greater understanding of the situation and meet women in the entertainment industry along with genuine affinity and non-judgemental attitudes regarding the women.

One of the demographic characteristics of Angeles City is an almost complete lack of white women. The two exceptions to this rule that I encountered were short visits from Canadian partners in the ‘Sex Trade in the Philippines’ project and religious missionaries (for which I was often mistaken for early on in my stay). With these population characteristics, I stood out as very different. I believe this difference facilitated my research because women were usually curious about me, and often wanted to know about other countries and regions of the world; they seemed to feel relaxed with these conversation topics and were constantly curious to learn more. I believe this aided in initially

getting to know the women, as I was someone they could speak with without the possibility of having to provide sexual services, as is the case with most of the foreigners they come into contact with.

In conducting research with entertainers, my age may also have served as a research advantage. The average age of participants was 22 years of age, but I spoke with entertainers between the ages of 15 and 26. Over the span of my stay in the Philippines I was 22 and 23 years of age; being a part of their peer group may have been a factor when meeting and getting acquainted with entertainers.

Race, class, gender and (perhaps) age combined to facilitate my access to women in the bars. Though women are not allowed in bars unescorted by men, I was typically exempted from this particular rule. It was rare that access to the bars were denied to me, though for Filipinas it is almost impossible to enter a bar without male accompaniment. The combination of my race and class diminished the negative effects of gender in this circumstance; however, my gender further facilitated access to women in the bars. When visiting women who lived in the bars I was allowed access into their living quarters. As Filipinas are not allowed in the bars in most cases and men are not allowed into the living corridors, this access was extremely valuable and allowed me to become familiarized with women in their living quarters, thus allowing greater accessibility to women in their own environments.

My educational level was a personal characteristic that served to both unite and divide me from the women in prostitution. Most of the women I had

interviewed had not graduated from high school, whereas I was often incorrectly perceived as an expert, both by prostituted women as well as various members of NGOs. Typically I would counter this assessment with the assertion that I was a student, present to listen and learn.

Though educational levels separated the women's personal characteristics from mine, education also served to minimize the distance between them and me. When I began to learn Tagalog (the national language), this pursuit served to minimize this discrepancy to a degree as it reversed the role of Research/Participant to incorporate the role of Student/Teacher, whereas I was the student. Using Tagalog words, slang and terminology common in the bars seemed to aid in both relaxing and amusing the women to whom I spoke. The Tagalog I did learn was for *chica chica* or chit chat. I never learned the language fluently, however, many of the women took a personal interest in my language attempts and would often teach me additional words, both during and after the interview.

Chapter Two:

Linking Prostitution and Sex Tourism With The Past

This chapter examines the history of the Philippines in order to grasp a better understanding of prostitution and sex tourism, via the prisms of relevant economic, political, social, military and colonial influences and factors. These macro factors have shaped and moulded social practices and economic realities along with cultural values to form and sustain an exploitative system under which prostituted women in the Philippines, and more specifically in Angeles City, are entrapped. This chapter places particular emphasis on the role of the Philippines government through its role in the promotion and perpetuation of international sex tourism and prostitution. According to Cynthia Enloe, one of the characteristics necessary for sex tourism to flourish is the need of governments to be searching for a new means to pursue development strategies to gain foreign currency and related economic benefits. This chapter will explore the Philippines national government's economic strategies as they adopted tourism and sex tourism as an economic development strategy, the international factors which supported the growth of tourism in the nation as well as the promotion of tourism in the country. In addition, I want to show how tourism has gained international emphasis and drive through the promotion of international agencies as a method of development and economic growth.

The Early Years

There is little information regarding Filipino society before Spanish colonization in the sixteenth century, despite extensive past archaeological finds. This lack of information is linked partially to Spanish colonization; in order to establish and entrench Catholicism, missionaries destroyed religious relics, native literature and pagan holy places.⁶ Milton Osborne points out that little is actually known, as most of the records regarding Filipino society before colonization were written after colonization was established.⁷

Accounts suggest that parts of the archipelago were developing political systems at the same time Islam was spreading and trade routes were being established with other areas of Southeast Asia.⁸ The islands were largely isolated from each other with no defining boundaries or people representing a nation, except in the southernmost islands of present day Philippines. In this area the spread of Islam created a small, unified political unit that largely withstood the repeated attempts at colonization by Spain.⁹

While the nation has largely lost its pre-colonial history, there are accounts that suggest that women have long been utilized as important links to establish relationships with other areas. Though information is sparse, there are records

⁶ Peter G. Gowing, *Islands Under The Cross: The Story of The Church in The Philippines* (Manila: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1967), p. 44.

⁷ Milton Osborne, *Southeast Asia: An Introductory History* (Thailand: Silkworm Books, 1997), p. 47.

⁸ Lynn Kwiatkowski, *Struggling With Development: The Politics of Hunger and Gender in The Philippines* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), p. 34.

⁹ Osborne, *Southeast Asia*, p. 47.

pointing to the importance of marriages in the establishment of trade routes¹⁰ as well as records of concubines.¹¹ Other than these accounts, women's roles in history have mainly been destroyed.

The 'discovery' of the Philippines is credited to Ferdinand Magellan in 1521;¹² the archipelago was later christened after Prince Philip (later to become king) of Spain.¹³ The colonization of the Philippines was dramatically different from other Southeast Asian countries, as Filipinos were colonized with the Bible, not the sword. This is not to state that Spanish colonization took place without violence, but that in comparison with the experiences of other colonized countries, it was relatively peaceful.¹⁴

Missionaries were sent instead of soldiers, uniting the northern part of the Philippines under Spanish rule and Catholicism.¹⁵ The state and church were united as one, and together they ruled over the 'Indos' (term to connote a native born Filipino in Spanish times).¹⁶ Catholicism was the unifying force in the Philippines; within the first century of Spanish colonization the vast majority of Filipinos were successfully converted to Catholicism.¹⁷ Today over 90% of Filipinos remain Catholic.¹⁸ Most of the Southern islands were never to come

¹⁰ Sonia M. Zaide, *The Philippines: A Unique Nation* (Quezon City: All-Nations Publishing, 1999), p. 50.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 58.

¹² Gowing, *Islands Under the Cross*, p. 18.

¹³ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁴ John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses 1565-1700* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), p. 10.

¹⁵ Osborne, *Southeast Asia*, p. 48.

¹⁶ Peter W. Stanley, *A Nation In The Making* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 15.

¹⁷ David Steinberg, "Tradition and Response in Crisis in the Philippines" in *Crisis in the Philippines: The Marcos Era and Beyond*, ed., John Bresnan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 36.

¹⁸ Zaide, *The Philippines*, p. 24.

under complete control by the Spanish, and today Mindanao (the Southern most island) remains predominantly Muslim. Though beyond the scope of this thesis, this partial autonomy of the southernmost islands continues to have widespread effects on the Philippines today.

Since the Philippines consisted mostly of small villages with no (or little) political connection to one another, the Spanish colonization started with a 'clean slate'. The colonization by Spain brought with it values, assumptions, ideologies and morals which created a nationalist framework for society within the nation. The country was 'birthed' and the people were moulded to fit Spanish ideologies and hold Spanish (Catholic) values.

The unifying force of the Bible brought oppressive gender roles, characteristics and behaviours. With the entrenchment of Catholicism came the ingrained dichotomy of the Madonna/Whore. Women's sexuality was tightly controlled under Catholicism, and virginity was revered. Lisa Sowle Cahill, an author in religious studies, claims that Roman Catholic tradition has "identified women above all else by their sexuality defined as capacity for motherhood and domesticity."¹⁹ The control of women's sexuality led to strict rules regarding the proper behaviour, roles and duties of a 'good' woman. Women had three categories they could fit into and still be considered a 'good' and 'proper' woman. These categories were the virgin maiden, the dutiful and caring

¹⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Women and Sexuality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), p. 1.

mother/wife, or a nun.²⁰ There was no room for alternatives for a ‘socially acceptable woman’. These religious and gender ideologies shaped, and continue to shape, the lives, experiences and options of women in the Philippines.

Many Asian cultures, including the Philippines, have an *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude or honour) in which a debt is owed to a patron or protector.²¹ This debt is socially significant and translates into a sense of obligation towards one’s extended family. David Steinberg, in an explanation of the *utang na loob*, states “(M)ost Filipinos see themselves embedded in a plural and interlocking web of obligations in which individual desires and priorities are subservient to family and communal goals.”²² While the debt of gratitude applies to all Filipinos, when the family struggles, it is typically the daughters’ responsibility to provide for their families in times of need.²³ Women in the Philippines are committed to taking care of their families, often by any means necessary.²⁴ European (Catholic) values combine with the debt of gratitude to create a situation by which women may not be able to follow both sets of values that define women’s roles and responsibilities. Due to economic, social and political circumstances, women who cannot support their families may enter prostitution and the sex trade, as they are caught between two contradictory cultural

²⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Misgynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church,” in *Religion and Sexism*, ed., Rosemary Radford Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 163.

²¹ Steinberg, “Tradition and Response”, p. 17.

²² Ibid, p. 33.

²³ Ibid, p. 12.

²⁴ *Canada: The New Frontier For Filipino Mail-order Brides* (British Columbia: Philippines Women Centre of B. C., 2000), p. 10.

expectations. Through a lack of options and by honouring the debt of gratitude, women enter prostitution and sex tourism but are then considered 'ruined' and 'spoiled' as they have exited the three socially acceptable categories allocated for women. They have entered the Whore side of the dichotomy and are now 'fallen women'.

Catholicism continues to have a direct impact on the lives of prostituted women at moral, social and political levels. Due to the strength of Catholicism within the state, the politics and legislation are shaped by religious values. This not only affects the views and opinions of prostituted women (both by greater society and the women themselves), but also controls the options women have open to them. Legislation reflecting Catholic values restricts divorce, limits contraception and criminalizes abortion (thus making abortion a dangerous procedure).²⁵ These constraints often add to pushing women into prostitution and oppressing them even further.

The Twentieth Century Begins

Throughout the later half of the nineteenth century, discontent surrounding colonization spread throughout the Philippines. The discontent transformed into nationalistic feelings when Spain refused to grant 'Indos' the same rights as Spaniards. Milton Osborne states, "The colonial subject (Filipinos) began to

²⁵ Saundra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, *Let The Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: The New York Press, 1992), p. 45.

revolt against Spanish rule in the nineteenth century because they were, in effect, excluded from being Spanish.”²⁶

The Filipinos revolted and fought for independence from 1898-1901. The nationalist dreams of Filipinos for independence were crushed, however, with the outcome of the Spanish-American and the Philippine American Wars. The Spanish-American War ended with the United States as the victor. Under the Treaty of Paris (signed in 1898) Spain ceded the Philippines, Guam and Puerto Rico (as well as the withdrawal from Cuba) to the United States for \$20 million.²⁷ After the treaty was signed, Filipinos were transformed from fighting Spanish colonizers to fighting American colonizers in the Philippine American War from 1899 to 1902.²⁸ Filipinos fought a defensive war and later switched to guerrilla warfare, but were unsuccessful in their attempts to achieve independence.²⁹ The American victory established the United States as a global empire at the turn of the century; however, this new placement in the international arena came at a high cost.³⁰ The Philippine American War “was one of the bloodiest and costliest wars in American history.”³¹

Colonization under the U. S. provided more political and civic rights for the Filipino population. From the beginning, the U. S. promised the Philippines independence, though a specific time-line was not given. Political changes brought in by the Americans ensured Filipinos greater human rights and

²⁶ Osborne, *Southeast Asia*, p. 79.

²⁷ Zaide, *The Philippines*, p. 255.

²⁸ Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream 1899-1999* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), p. 5.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid, p.249.

³¹ Ibid.

participation in government.³² The changes and reforms separated the church and state, established a democratic government and guaranteed the right to advocate for Philippine independence (after 1907).³³ Women in particular enjoyed greater social and political freedoms under American reforms. Their movements became much less restricted and they gained greater educational opportunities, the right to vote, and they could partake in any profession, including public office (at least legally).³⁴ Reforms to the political and economic system continued under American supervision until the Second World War.

A few hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Japan dropped bombs on Manila.³⁵ By May 1942, the Philippines was occupied by Japan. Though the occupation lasted a relatively short time, it was fraught with violence, brutality and severe subjugation and oppression of women. The Japanese Imperial Army relied on 'comfort stations' or military brothels in order to provide for the sexual 'needs' of the military. Comfort stations followed in the wake of the Japanese military; sometimes women arrived with or before the ammunition.³⁶ Although the majority of comfort women appear to have originated from Korea, there is evidence of the Japanese raping and forcing Filipinas to become military comfort women during the Japanese occupation.³⁷

³² Zaide, *The Philippines*, p.301.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 303.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 324.

³⁶ George Hicks, *The Comfort Women* (New York: Norton, 1994), p. 16.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 124.

After the war, the Philippines was again handed over to the Americans in 1945. Colonization came to an end shortly after when the Philippines became the first country in Southeast Asia to gain independence, the first “voluntary decolonisation of a colonial power after the Second World War in 1946.”³⁸ The U. S. maintained a prominent role in the Philippines, even after independence was achieved, as there continued to be American military bases in Angeles City (Clark Airbase) and Olongapo City (Subic Bay Naval Base).³⁹ The U. S. had a Military Bases Agreement (MBA) established upon granting the Philippines independence.⁴⁰

Though the decolonisation of most Southeast Asian countries occurred shortly after that of the Philippines, the U. S. maintained a strong military presence throughout the region. The United States controlled bases “from Anchorage to San Diego, Hawaii, Vladivostok, Seoul, Yokohama, Cam Ranh Bay, Subic (Olongapo) and Clark (Angeles), Wellington, Belau and Kwajalein.”⁴¹ Many countries, including the Philippines, became increasingly dependent on the presence of the American military.⁴² The military bases were in full use throughout the Korean and Vietnam Wars, bringing in foreign currency and increased employment. The bases were staffed with a large number of ‘locals’, hired for maintenance and secondary jobs on the bases.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

³⁹ James Trager, “Philippines History 101.” 2000. Online. A People’s Chronology, Available: <http://www.tribo.org/history2.html> February 2002.

⁴⁰ *Hospitality- What Price? The U. S. Navy at Subic Bay...And The Women’s Response* (Olongapo: Buklod Center, 1990), p. 10.

⁴¹ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, p. 85.

⁴² Sturdevant and Stoltzfus, *Let The Good Times Roll*, p. 16.

The American military bases were surrounded by ‘entertainment’ industries in order to meet the sexual ‘needs’ of the military, euphemized as ‘Rest and Recreation’ (R&R). Through the practice of R&R, prostitution thrived while supporting and reinforcing sexist and racist views on the roles, attitudes and characteristics of Filipinas and perpetuating the importance placed on meeting male sexual ‘needs’ within a military. This was a predictable phenomenon, as prostitution surrounds most military bases around the world. Later, many retired men from the American military would return to live and operate sex establishments, or journey to participate in sex tourism.

The presence of the American military not only supported the emergence of infrastructure utilized for R&R but the American military was also responsible for the establishment of the Social Hygiene Clinic.⁴³ The Social Hygiene Clinic was established in order to ‘protect’ American soldiers from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Though protection of military personnel was the rationale utilized, it was the women in the bars who were responsible for getting tested for STDs weekly. The soldiers were assured that the women were clean by the display of cards pinned to their uniforms. The men were not obligated to take part in the system; it was the women who carried this burden.

At the end of the Vietnam War, the United States withdrew a large number of personnel from Southeast Asia. Though the American military presence was still strong (the Vietnam War was over, the Cold War was not), the cutback had a direct impact on towns and villages surrounding the military bases in

⁴³ Dolores Flamiano and Donald Goertzen, *Critical Decade: Prospects for Democracy in the Philippines in the 1990s* (Manila: Philippine Resource Center, 1990), p.128.

Southeast Asia as well as on the women who worked in the 'R&R' establishments. The decrease in U. S. personnel was felt like a ripple throughout Southeast Asia; in the Philippines alone, activities at the bases were reduced by 30 to 50%.⁴⁴ Increasingly, countries such as Thailand and the Philippines began to look elsewhere (with direction from the World Bank) to establish a means of economic growth and settled their sights on tourism.

Searching For Economic Strategies: International Tourism

Tourism is an attractive economic alternative for governments of developing countries. The Philippines has come to rely heavily on tourism as an economic necessity, and most of it consists of sex tourism. The adoption of sex tourism in the Philippines as an economic strategy was shaped by several factors, including the presence of American military bases, the 'Rest and Recreation' (R&R) establishments and the utilization of Filipinas as natural resources and material commodities. Over the decades, the growth of international tourism to developing countries has grown dramatically. In the mid 1970s, 8% of international tourists were North Americans or Europeans traveling to developing countries on vacation. By 1988, 24% of international arrivals from North America and Europe traveled to developing countries, and in 1997 this figure rose to 30.5%.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Flamiano and Goertzen, *Critical Decade*, p. 127.

⁴⁵ "Pro-Poor Tourism: Putting Poverty at the Heart of the Tourism Agenda." Online. Overseas Development Institute. 3 March 2001. <http://www.oneworld.org/odi/nrp/51.html> March 2000.

At one time only an option for the elite, tourism opened up to the masses (in developed nations) after World War Two. Mass international tourism became possible due to economic changes in the labour market in developed countries as well as the advent of new technologies. Bishop and Robinson research sex tourism in Thailand in particular as well as the nature of international sex tourism in general; they point out that an increasing number of people in developed countries had access to greater disposable incomes to take vacations and the amount of vacation time for these workers continued to grow.⁴⁶ Advances in technology, such as the creation and wide-spread use of the jumbo jet, created an opportunity for mass tourism to grow and thrive.

In the 1960s, tourism was strongly promoted by the United Nations, national governments and tourism organizations.⁴⁷ Tourism was viewed not only as an economic strategy for modernization, but was also recommended because it avoids the heavy environmental consequences of many other industries. It was also viewed as a “route to world peace and mutual understanding.”⁴⁸ Tourism was promoted as an economic development strategy for developing countries to achieve a greater market niche in the international capitalistic economy as it was viewed as providing such economic benefits as foreign exchange, direct and indirect employment, specialization in a service

⁴⁶ Ryan Bishop and Lillian S. Robinson, “In The Night Market: Tourism, Sex and Commerce in Contemporary Thailand,” *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 1&2 (1999), p. 33.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

(thus a decreased reliance on primary products and their decreased terms of trade), diversification of the economy and regional development.⁴⁹

In the mid 1970s, former Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos explicitly promoted tourism as an economic development strategy and established the Department of Tourism. Marcos concentrated on building first-class infrastructure, including top of the line hotels and convention sites.⁵⁰ Though tourism was viewed as an attractive strategy of economic development, nations in Southeast Asia, such as the Philippines and Thailand, are a long distance from most developed countries, making these nations a more expensive destination than would appeal to most families and honeymooners. Bishop and Robinson have conducted research, which shows that Thailand dealt with this difficulty by shifting the nation's tourism emphasis towards attracting single men.⁵¹ While the Philippines largely lacks the tourism based research which has been extensively conducted in Thailand, it would seem as though the Philippines pursued the same route to tourism. Increasingly 'R&R' establishments were utilized to provide entertainment establishments for various clientele in the sex tourism industry.

In order to attract their market niche, Filipino women were utilized as prime selling points and appealing 'natural resources' to encourage and entice foreign visitors to the Philippines. In order to attract their tourism market 'niche,' women were systematically stereotyped through sexualized and

⁴⁹ Louise Kempton, "Why Should Eco-Tourism Be Developed?" *Concern*, No. 4 (April/May 1997), p. 5.

⁵⁰ "Sex Trafficking: The Other Flow of the Tide," *Network Against Trafficking in Women*, Vol.2, No. 2 (August 1998), p. 4.

⁵¹ Bishop and Robinson, "In The Night Market". p. 34.

racialized advertising. Filipinas (and Asian women in general), for the purposes of promoting sex tourism, have been 'othered'. Asian women are portrayed as exotic, subservient and sexually available. Though the Philippines is rich and beautiful in culture and environment, it is the sexualized and racialized image of Filipinas, and the commodification of their bodies and their lives that serve as strong incentives for tourists to visit. According to Kazuko Watanabe, "(T)he materialism and market economy of today have created a consumerist ethic that legitimises the commodification of women's bodies, which can be bought, sold and abused according to demand."⁵²

Though sex tourism had become established in the Philippines throughout the 1970s, the American military remained the primary clientele of the entertainment industry through the R&R establishments. The Philippines therefore remained economically reliant on the presence of the American military. By the mid-1980s, it is estimated that the entertainment industries surrounding the American military bases in the Philippines generated more than \$500 million.⁵³ By 1985, the U. S. military was the second largest employer in the Philippines.⁵⁴ In Angeles City alone,

an estimated 9000 prostituted women plied their trade in Angeles "R&R" district. Next to the 13000 workers directly employed at Clark Air Base, prostituted women comprised the second largest category of workers....⁵⁵

⁵² Kazuko Watanabe, "Trafficking in Women's Bodies, Then and Now: The Issue of Military Comfort Women," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 1-2 (1999), p. 22.

⁵³ Judith Mirkinson, "Red Light, Green Light: The Global Trafficking of Women," *Breakthrough*, Spring 1994, p. 3.

⁵⁴ Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, p. 86.

⁵⁵ "Women's Lives Speak of Harder Times," *IMA- Ing Makababaying Aksyon- The Pro-Women Action*, January- April 1997, p.6.

While Marcos concentrated on international economic development initiatives through the promotion of sex tourism, the national political situation in the Philippines was in turmoil. President Marcos declared martial law in the Philippines from 1972-1986.⁵⁶ During this time, rights were suspended, strict curfews were maintained and many people from opposing political parties and leftist activists disappeared.⁵⁷ The president turned dictator ruled the country with strong military force. In 1986, Marcos' reign came to an abrupt end under People Power, or EDSA Revolution, which was a mass demonstration and protest by the people against suspicious results of the recent election, the president and the conditions of their treatment.⁵⁸ Upon Marcos' ousting by the people, Corazon Aquino came into power. She had been the wife of Marcos' most public opposition leader, Senator Benigno Aquino, who was killed upon his return to the Philippines from exile in 1983.⁵⁹ Aquino became the first female president of the Philippines.

The American military continued to support the sex trade, until the withdrawal from their military bases in 1991. American military presence officially ended after three events supported the withdrawal: the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, the expiry of the Military Bases Agreement (MBA) and the end of the Cold War. When the agreement expired, the Senate rejected the idea

⁵⁶ Krishan and Maila Stivens, *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia* (Asia: Routledge, 1998), p. 291.

⁵⁷ Jose Maria Sison, *The Philippine Revolution: The Leader's View* (New York: Crane Russak, 1989), p. 72.

⁵⁸ Gretchen Casper, *Fragile Democracies: The Legacies of Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), p. 117.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

of a new base treaty, ending forty-four years of American military presence in the independent nation.⁶⁰

The Switch From Military Prostitution to Sex Tourism

Cynthia Enloe has explored the conditions necessary for sex tourism to flourish. Conditions centre on the situations of women and their families, affluent tourists, the development path of governments and the economic infrastructure of the business class. Though sex tourism had become established in the Philippines throughout the 1970s, American military personnel were the primary clientele of the entertainment industry, or the 'R&R' establishments. Upon the eruption of Mount Pinatubo and the withdrawal of the American military, the communities surrounding the bases were economically (and environmentally) devastated and this created harsh circumstances for the surrounding communities. The area was thrown into economic and social upheaval. A large number of secondary jobs were lost due to the closure of the bases and the majority of entertainment industries closed their doors for lack of clientele. Prostituted women were out of jobs, with no hope of alternative employment. Though the government offered programmes to individuals and families either displaced or newly unemployed, the situation of prostituted women remained largely invisible.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Lynn Lee, *From Carriers To Communities* (Manila: WEDPRO, 1992), p. 9.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 3.

This recession lasted for several years, but the interconnection of state economic dependence, the history of military prostitution and perpetual unemployment created an environment in which the sex tourism industry began to flourish again. Foreign male customers from Australia, United States, Canada, Europe and other countries soon began to flock to Angeles City- the 'brothel of the Philippines.' Bars opened once more and new generations of women (some daughters of former 'entertainers') found themselves working in the bar. Sex tourism proved to be extremely resilient; 85% of tourists to the Philippines are now men.⁶² Today, the exact number of prostituted women in the Philippines is difficult to ascertain, since it remains in the underground economy. The estimates hover between 300 000 and 500 000 women.⁶³ Civilians replaced military personnel as the primary clientele for the entertainment industry, however, the levels of exploitation remained. Watanabe states of sex tourism, "the only difference is in the way the men dress; instead of military uniforms, they now wear business suits. In both cases, men are dehumanizing {sic} women."⁶⁴

Diversifying The Sex Tourism Market

Though the U. S. officially withdrew its military in 1991, military personnel have since returned. In 1999, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA)

⁶² Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women: A Feminist International Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 196.

⁶³ Cecilia Hofmann, *Questions and Issues on Prostitution: What We Need To Know* (Quezon City: Coalition Against Trafficking in Women- Asia Pacific, 1998), p. 12.

⁶⁴ Kazuko Watanabe, "Trafficking in Women's Bodies", p. 23.

was signed between the Philippines and the U. S., permitting joint military exercises and giving the American military open access to 22 docking ports, located throughout the nation.⁶⁵ The agreement created widespread opposition in the Philippines from NGOs and activists around the country. Reasons for opposition varied widely, ranging from concerns of nationalism and identity to the concern of increased exploitation of Filipinas through prostitution. The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women- Asia Pacific stated “(t)he presence of U. S. military forces will yet again breed prostitution and sexual exploitation of women and children already driven to destitution as a result of the continuing economic crisis in our country.”⁶⁶



In 2002, International Women’s Day in Angeles City was marked with a protest and rally against the presence of the U. S. military in The Philippines.

Women, men and children were out in numbers to protest. Many of the children wore signs, which read “I Love US Troops... Just kidding.”

⁶⁵ *Coalition: Asia-Pacific Report*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 2002), p. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

After September 11, 2001 the American government declared 'War on Terrorism' and drastically increased its level of military actions on an international scale. The Philippines was among the countries where military campaigns were staged. Joint military exercises between the Filipino and American militaries, Balikatan2-01 and Balikatan2-02 were held throughout the end of 2001 and 2002.⁶⁷ The joint military exercises served to increase the number of sex clients, thus promoting the further expansion of the sex industry and supporting the exploitation of Filipinas for their convenience. In Balikatan2-02 alone, it was estimated that 2700 American soldiers participated in the joint military exercises.⁶⁸ The influx of American soldiers increased the demand for sex tourism and prostitution and increased the exploitation of Filipinas throughout the nation.

In response to the growing concerns regarding the increase in prostitution, President Gloria Arroyo announced that strict regulations would be enforced regarding the R&R of American military personnel.⁶⁹ Military personnel had to stay in a group when leaving the bases or take guided tours; curfews were also enforced, differing by rank. Tourist attractions such as cultural shows were to be promoted in order to steer American personnel away from the bars.⁷⁰ However, part of the cultural sensitivity training received by Americans upon their arrival continued to include tips on the local nightlife such as the prices of 'ladies drinks,' which are alcoholic beverages bought for prostituted women in

⁶⁷ Volt Contreras, "What Does The Price of a Ladies' Drink Have To Do With It?" *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Sunday April 21, 2002, p. A3.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the sex tourism district.⁷¹ Teddy Casino, secretary general of Bayan, a Filipino NGO, stated, “We expect all out prostitution (now). This is not far-fetched when nightspots, the prices of beer and ladies’ drinks, and bar schedules are among the matters being discussed at these briefings.”⁷²

Even when American military personnel were not allowed to exit the military bases, they found ways to continue in the participation of prostitution. Suzanne and Amanda (two women with whom I spoke) both worked in the bars, and they revealed one such way these attempts were made futile. For awhile, American military personnel were not permitted to leave Clark; however, the soldiers got around these restrictions by ordering women from the bars and having them dropped off by taxi inside the base.

Though efforts were made to minimize the increase in prostitution, these efforts have largely failed. The government attempted to address concerns that the military exercises would exacerbate prostitution and assured the populace that this would not be the case; however, the bar owners and managers began to prepare for the exercises before the American military had arrived. During my internship I viewed many of the bars in Angeles City as they underwent ‘facelifts’ in preparation of the arrival of the military, hired additional women to meet the growing needs of tourists and soldiers, and otherwise diversified to meet the expansion in clientele. The entertainment industry continues to service sex tourists while welcoming the influx of American military.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

The military exercises have thus increased the exploitation of Filipinas, not only in Angeles City, but also around the nation, as American service personnel have been spread around the country to participate in military exercises. The landscape of sex tourism is therefore changing in the Philippines. Instead of concentrating on sex tourists or military clientele, the bars are embracing both areas of the market niche, specializing in sex holidays as well as 'rest and recreation.'

Chapter Three:

The Customers:

International Sex Tourists

Throughout the duration of my internship, I had the opportunity to speak with numerous sex tourists. I did not interview them per se but instead participated in informal conversations. At times I asked their opinions on sex tourism, prostituted women and the Philippines in general. However, I typically sat back, listened and allowed them to take control of the conversations. By allowing them to take control of the conversations, men became more relaxed in my presence since my reactions and responses fit neatly with the gender roles with which they identified, were used to and thus were most comfortable. This approach also worked to my advantage: I learned a lot from the directions their conversations would take. Invariably discussion would turn to, and often centre on, issues of gender, race and class.

In this chapter I focus on sex tourists, coupling participant observation, informal conversations and personal reflections with secondary sources. The majority of prostitution literature examines the issues in a fragmented manner by neglecting sex tourists in the equation, thus giving the impression that prostitution is a women's issue or that women are the perpetrators of the sex industry. Philosopher Carole Pateman has noted and criticized prostitution research and greater society because "the patriarchal assumption that prostitution is a problem about women ensures that the other participant {men}

in prostitution contract escapes scrutiny.”⁷³ Though it is not the main objective of this thesis, I feel that it is important to examine the role male clientele play in sex tourism and prostitution.

Sex tourism and prostitution have become increasingly commercialized in nature, and just like any other form of commercial industry, sex tourism and prostitution rely on supply and demand. Simply put, the more that men go on sex holidays, the more women will be exposed to prostitution in destination countries. The difference between most industries and sex tourism is the exploitation; it is not the systematic exploitation of natural resources but of women’s bodies that makes this industry so profitable.

Race and Gender: The Exotic ‘Other’

From a sex tourist point of view, sex tourism and prostitution are about achieving and fulfilling sexual fantasies. One such fantasy is achieving ‘power over’ women by seeking traditional gender roles and norms. Another sexual fantasy that sex tourism is based on is the idea of achieving power over the exotic/erotic other. The connection between the exotic and erotic in a process of othering is a legacy of colonialism. Othering is both strengthened and perpetuated by sex tourism marketing and is based on the combination of gender and race in destination countries. Sex tourism is based on the exotic and erotic fantasies of men through the commodification of women.

⁷³ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 193.

Asian women in particular have come to represent the 'other;' Asian women are treated as 'essential femininity,' which is supported by racist notions of Asia. Joane Nagel argues that the Asian female body is a spoken site of servile sexual availability.⁷⁴ Global representations of Asian women rest on 'othering' by gender and race, which succeeds in selling the image of sex, race, culture and difference for the purposes of sexual commodification. These gender and racial stereotypes are commodified through sex tourism in order to fulfill men's fantasies of the exotic, erotic other. Lynn Thiesmeyer, as quoted by Joane Nagel, states:

(T)he Asian/Asian American woman has no parallel in the fantasies of the West...advertisements using Asian women, for example, are evocative not only of the sexual mystery but also docility and subservience supposedly 'natural to the oriental female'... These women thus become metaphors for adventure, cultural difference and sexual subservience.⁷⁵

Sex tourism destinations are therefore an area in which men's sexual fantasies can be met by the hyper gender and racial stereotypes of Asian women. Through the exchange of currency, the sex clients feel full justification to oppress and exploit women in order to meet their fantasies, desires and their aspirations to suppress and exploit.

Sex tourism represents one dimension of the political economy of sex; the relationships between prostituted women and sex tourists mirror the relationships of domination, subordination and exploitation between former colonizers and colonized, and now between developed and developing

⁷⁴ Joane Nagel, "States of Arousal/Fantasy Islands: Race, Sex and Romance in the Global Economy of Desire." *American Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 2000), p. 162.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

countries.⁷⁶ Sex tourism is intrinsically related to the notions of domination and subordination and is the reflection of these international relations at a personal level. The global economy of sex is built on gender and racial stereotypes, which have been placed in a hierarchal relationship between sex tourists and prostituted women.

Jan Jindy Pettman researches women in subordinate positions around the globe, including women in sex tourism. She explores postcolonial attitudes and relations to demonstrate that gender and race rely on notions of oppression and exploitation. Relations are both gendered and racial; it is the cultural assumptions behind these relations that perpetuate sex tourism and prostitution in destination countries. Pettman states: "Sex tourism re-enacts colonial and contemporary power relations, which are 'raced' as well as gendered. Sex tourism becomes a metaphor for relations between men and women under capitalism, and in colonialism and racism."⁷⁷ These post-colonial relationships are based on the 'othering' of Asian women; this 'othering' is reflected by sex tourists who actively participate in racist and sexist actions and attitudes. These relationships create a space in which most (but not all) sex tourists participate in actions and attitudes which most would not partake in, in their own countries.

The perpetuation of racist and sexist assumptions which are implicit in the 'othering' of Asian women are encouraged through the sex tourism marketing via brochures, magazines and the internet. Men are not only often made aware of sex tourism destination nations through the internet but are also 'properly

⁷⁶ Pettman, *Worlding Women*, p. 196.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 196.

prepared' to perpetuate sexist and racist notions offered by sex business owners as well as other male clients. On the internet, sex clients have a larger community of like-minded individuals at their disposal; these men support and 'look after' one another, and they continue to support ideas of exploitation through hierarchal relations of domination and subordination.

Feminist researchers Ryan Bishop and Lillian Robinson concentrate on men's roles in sex tourism through an exploration of sex clients' words and voices as they are written and placed on the internet in order to explore their attitudes, opinions, experiences and assumptions.⁷⁸ Though Bishop and Robinson specifically research sex tourism in Thailand, there are many similarities between the sex tourism districts of Thailand and the Philippines. One such similarity seems to be the sex tourists themselves; it would seem that many sex tourists travel to both destination nations.

The researchers have discovered that within these sex diaries, sexist and racist assumptions and ideologies are dominant. They also explore websites dedicated to sex tourism and sex tourist destinations, written both by clients as well as sex business operators who are marketing racist and sexist assumptions to men in order to attract them to the industry. Among the websites are 'etiquette guides,' with recommendations, sexual descriptions, as well as sexist and racist stereotypes depicting women of sex tourist destination nations. These sexist and racist assumptions are often reflected in the words, attitudes and opinions of sex tourists themselves when researchers interview them. Many of

⁷⁸ Ryan Bishop and Lillian S. Robinson "In The Night Market: Tourism, Sex and Commerce in Contemporary Thailand," *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 1&2 (1999), p. 38.

the overtly racist and sexist assumptions and attitudes were present in the conversations I had with clients in the Philippines. Examples will be given below.

Equality Now is a New York based women's rights organization that "works to protect and promote the civil, political, economic and social rights of girls and women."⁷⁹ One of the areas that *Equality Now* concentrates on is the demand side of the sex tourism equation, by examining the marketing strategies utilized by sex tour operators. These marketing strategies rely on the ideas of the commodification of women's bodies, the othering of women in sex destination nations and the normalization of sex tourism and prostitution. These marketing strategies are not only utilized by sex tour operators but also perpetuated by sex tourists to justify their actions and attitudes regarding the exploitation of women. By examining the marketing strategies utilized in magazines, brochures and the internet, *Equality Now* has highlighted the perpetuation of racism and sexism supported in the hierarchal relationships perpetuated by the sex trade. The organization has studied the portrayal of prostituted women in particular and Asian women in general and has found "(T)here's never a discussion about the women as people. They're talking about a commodity; it's all about price and performance."⁸⁰

Distinguishing ties between colonial relations and postcolonial attitudes in the actions and opinions of sex clients highlights the racism and sexism that

⁷⁹ "Equality Now." Online. Available: http://www.equalitynow.org/english/pressroom/press_releases/bigapple_20030820_en.html 1 August 2005.

⁸⁰ Marina Budhos, "Putting the Heat on Sex Tourism," *Ms.* March/April 1997, p. 15.

they perpetuate. The racism and sexism, both implicit and explicit, support and promote the continued growth of the sex trade by encouraging the demand side of the equation. Within these postcolonial attitudes, women are both sexualized and racialized in ways that create hierarchical relations of domination and subordination. These attitudes rely on stereotypical characteristics and traits which 'other' women for the continuation of the sex trade. By utilizing this principle, the promotion and continuation of the sex trade becomes apparent, the racism intrinsic to the system is highlighted, the subordination of women is evident and the emphasis on men's domination becomes clear. Images of women that are 'sexed' and 'raced' perpetuate sex tourism through postcolonial attitudes. Jan Jindy Pettman points out that, "(S)miles associate the Asian woman with male adventure and female availability. These kinds of images are used to sell third-world tourism and make 'other' women available to the tourist/predatory sexed gaze."⁸¹

The process of 'othering' by race and sex of Asian women serves to commodify women in sex tourism for the sexual and financial exploitation of men, both as clients and as business operators. Assumptions are both 'raced' and 'sexed' in order to strengthen postcolonial attitudes. These attitudes are based on hierarchical relationships of oppression and subjugation in a political economy of sex to serve the interests of men through the exploitation of women. Marketing strategies both perpetuate and strengthen the 'othering' process so as to strengthen the sex tourist mentality.

⁸¹ Jan Jindy Pettman, *Worlding Women*, p. 195.

Who Are the Customers?

Today, in the sex tourism district of Angeles City, international tourists roam the streets. The landscape is a mosaic of nationalities; most of the sex tourists come from the United States, Australia and Europe, but there are also men from Canada, Japan, Korea and various other nationalities. The demography of sex tourists has become increasingly diverse in nature over the past decade. Prior to 1991, most sex clientele were part of the American military and were stationed at Clark Air Force Base (in Angeles City) and Subic Bay Base (in Olongapo City). However, with the withdrawal of the American military in 1991, clients have increasingly traveled from 'all corners' of the world to participate in cheap sexual encounters. Today, the diversity of international sex tourists on holiday can be loosely divided into three categories: former American military, the international sex tourist and current officers/servicemen of the American military.

Sex tourists come in all shapes and sizes, visit from all 'corners' of the developed world, stay for varying lengths of time and have diverse experiences both before they visit the country and through the duration of their stay. However, in Angeles City, some commonalities can be easily discerned from the social landscape of sex tourists; these commonalities centre on class backgrounds, prior sex tourism experiences, race and age. In the past, one would have assumed that an individual taking a vacation in a far distanced destination country would be from an upper class or upper middle class

background. The sex tourists in the Philippines that I spoke with, however, were largely from the working class. Most of them held a wide variety of occupations, such as carpenters, plumbers and other 'blue-collar' occupations.



Sex Tourists at the bar as women dance.

As I mentioned earlier, most men participating in sex tourism are white and from developed countries. This is not to say that Blacks and Asians (particularly Japanese and Koreans) do not participate. However, in Angeles City, they are a minority. Most of these men fall within a particular age bracket as well; the majority of sex tourists I spoke with or viewed were between the ages of forty and sixty. This age bracket is not at all surprising, as many of the older men became aware of Angeles City as a sex tourism destination through their involvement in the Vietnam War, or else were made aware of Angeles through the American involvement and stationing of military personnel in the Philippines after this era.

Arguably the most important commonality was the consistency and frequency of sex tourism vacations. Whether men had been on repeat vacations to the Philippines (as many had) or had traveled to other sex tourism vacations, the majority of men with whom I spoke had previously participated in sex tourism. Many of men had previously traveled to Bangkok and had become aware of the sex tourism district in Angeles City through those travels. Thus, sex tourism in one country seems to support, promote and encourage sex tourism in other nations around the world. Amsterdam was another sex tourism destination mentioned; however, this was more infrequent than references to Bangkok. The three most common ways men discovered sex tourism destinations were through the use of the internet, through word of mouth by other sex tourists or through their participation with the American military. Sex tourists often networked between themselves through a process of shared camaraderie, systematic justification and joint victimization. These traits will be explored later in this chapter.

The Mental Musings of Sex Tourists

In reflecting on the views and insights of sex tourists, it is important to note that the majority of sex tourists I spoke with were repeat tourists or had relocated to Angeles City. Tourists who were new to sex districts or to the area generally ignored me. I was regarded as an oddity and many of the men reacted with shock when they first saw me. Like most Filipinos, regular tourists who

were used to the sex tourism district were surprised to see a young, white woman. Since these were the tourists most interested in my presence, much of the insights regarding sex tourists come from them. Among the similarities in 'mental musings' of sex tourists are the need for protection through self-justification, their legitimization through consumerist ethics, their self-victimization and a fantastical mentality, which is the split between fantasy and reality.

The clash between fantasy and reality is startling but apparent. While men fulfill their fantasies in dominant positions (race, sex and class), women lack basic rights and basic choices. It is this split between fantasy and reality along with the attempt to secure their dominant positions (which in itself is a large part of the fantasy) which I believe leads to the tendency towards self-victimization by sex tourists. This victimization not only serves to justify and excuse sex tourists of their role in sex tourism but also minimizes the negative impacts on women (in the sex tourists' minds) and serves to secure their relative positions of dominance through relative invisibility.

The pursuit of men's sexual fantasies brings sex clients from around the world to experience the commodification of women's bodies and lives. The inequalities of Asian women and sex tourists magnifies the situation in which White men openly exploit their positions of power through a consumerist ethic by which currency has been exchanged and they hold a sense of entitlement. Their relative class dominance has created a 'mega consumerist ethic' in which men perpetually complain about the services they pay for and expect to receive.

Once payment is made, clients feel justified in pressuring and/ or forcing women to partake in acts they feel highly uncomfortable with or are morally opposed to. One particular practice women were opposed to was 'Three-Holing' (vaginal, oral and anal sex). I spoke with women who were all opposed to this practice, but several had been forced to participate for fear of being penalized. Because the women were paid for, they 'belonged' to the men for the evening; sex clients seem to feel justified in subjugating women to participate in acts against their will. They were, after all, customers who were simply receiving the services they paid for.

It is little wonder that men feel justified in their participation in sex tourism. The environment that encompasses sex tourism (both in the Philippines and internationally) supports and encourages their participation. Though prostitution is illegal in the Philippines, the customers are not penalized, or even charged. It is only the women who bear this burden; it is expected and encouraged of men through advertisements, networks and infrastructure. Sex tourists are encouraged to live out their fantasies and when these fantasies involve violence they need have little fear of repercussions. Typically the harshest punishment to befall the abusive customer would be a refusal to bar-fine a woman in that particular bar in the future. This 'harsh' consequence seldom occurs but need not worry a sex tourist anyway: there are plenty of bars to choose from.

Sex clients have further means of protection through 'support groups' online. Web sites on the sex tourist district in Angeles City ensure that potential

sex tourists are informed of their 'rights' as clientele. Tips, advice and opinions regarding the prices for women and drinks, the way to bar fine, the places to go and the women to bar fine for sexual practices are easily available on the internet, along with a wide selection of information that serves to distance or 'other' the Filipina bargirls.

Class: The Multi-Purpose Nature of Poverty

Poverty is a word commonly utilized by sex tourists in the Philippines. The undeniable existence of the poverty of women in the bars as well as the fact that the majority of prostituted women work in the bars to support their families was utilized by sex clients to support their prerogatives and preferences. Sex clients are creative in their use of the language of poverty; they often refer to the impoverished conditions in the Philippines to justify their actions, as a bargaining tool and as a derogatory characteristic.

When speaking to me, most sex tourists attempted to justify their presence. Poverty was the primary reason sex clients used to attempt to justify their actions. This justification was presented regardless of the nature of my questions, indeed, it was typically offered regardless of whether I had presented any questions referencing sex tourism at all. The customers I spoke with openly recognized the poverty of prostituted women; most adopted the 'Good Samaritan' approach by arguing that they were helping the women to support themselves and their families as well as the Philippines in general.

This view is championed by the brochures, ads and web sites that promote the ideas that not only can men's fantasies be met (or even exceeded), but they will also leave with a good feeling because they are helping some family raise itself above the poverty line.⁸² This market strategy naturalizes prostitution and the subjugation of women as both legitimate and justified by the business people who attract the customers to Angeles City; this naturalization could be heard time and again as sex tourists sometimes sounded like walking advertisements or promotional subjects for the sex tourism district of Angeles City.

Some of the men openly referred to poverty as a form of bargaining tool. If a woman is uncomfortable with a sexual request/demand, the clients could simply find a woman more 'willing' or more desperate to make money and/ or fill quotas. This bargaining tool is recognized as a form of power held by sex clients; not only did some clients refer to this, it was also openly recognized by prostituted women as well as bar managers. The customers are aware that many of the women are desperate to make money and if a woman refuses, the customer can simply find someone else who will participate. It is, after all, a money back guarantee; the customer can simply return to the bar with the woman, speak to the manager and another 'more willing' girl will be provided. The first woman will not receive any payment and, furthermore, may be fined P500 (or roughly \$10 U. S.), the equivalent of between two and four days pay.

The poverty of women also serves as the greatest insult towards bar women by sex clients; derogatory language often centres on issues of poverty.

⁸² Lillian S. Robinson, "Touring Thailand's Sex Industry." *Nation*, Vol. 257, No. 14 (November 1999), p. 493.

Men who would recognize the severe poverty of prostituted women and the fact that women are working as prostitutes to support their families in the provinces would often make these observations in a cursory manner as if this observation was expected of them. Later on in the conversation, men would often return to the subject of poverty, though poverty would be viewed through a different lens. Poverty would often serve as the main form of insult directed at Filipinas- women were viewed as greedy, and the view was often stated that Filipinas were only using the men for their money.

Degrading usages of poverty can be viewed in *Tourist Bob's Bargirl-ese Translation Guide*. Tourist Bob refers to this site as a "service to prospective visitors to Angeles and other Philippine locations."⁸³ The 'translations' provided centre on everyday phrases that are twisted in order to portray Filipinas as money-hungry and teach men to be wary of them. A simple question such as "Where are you from?" is translated into "Where will you move me and my family?" Another example is "*Mahal na mahal kita!*," (a rough translation is I love you very much) is translated into "I love your money."⁸⁴

Though men recognize poverty as an essential reason for women working in the bars and for the existence of sex tourism, they would utilize poverty as a derogatory characteristic of bar women. They saw their actions as beneficial to the women and the country; but women's 'greediness' for money was

⁸³ Tourist Bob, "Bargirl-ese Translation Guide." Sunday March 7, 1999. Online. Available: <http://www.gr2.com/bargirl-ese.html> 2002.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

something to be wary of. Men were simply trying to help women but women would 'ruin' this by concentrating on money.

Sex Tourists: The Customers, The 'Victims'

One of the common statements I heard in my conversations with sex tourists was the overwhelming tendency to view themselves as victims. This self-victimization was approached in many different ways, however, they generally viewed themselves as benevolent tourists who were constantly being taken advantage of. This self-victimization is not unique to the Philippines or to my own research experiences. Self-victimization occurred by role reversal; they saw themselves as being taken advantage of, as being used, and as being denied what was rightfully theirs. This self-victimization obscures their power, at least from their own minds so as to lend them justification for their actions and attitudes.

Jeremy Seabrook has performed extensive research on the demand side of the sex tourism equation through interviews with sex tourists. Though Seabrook conducted his research in Thailand, there are many similarities between Thailand and the Philippines. In fact, many sex clients frequent both sex tourism destinations. He has found that relationships that develop between prostituted women and sex tourists have distinct patterns. In the beginning of the relationship, the men's attitudes rely on implicit racist and sexist assumptions; however, as the relationships continue, these assumptions typically

become explicit. What the sex tourists from the beginning generally know (that women are working in the sex industry to support their families) becomes a personal betrayal and they often respond with anger.⁸⁵ Seabrook has experienced the sex tourists' tendency towards self-victimization as well as their perpetuation of racism and sexism time and again. Seabrook states:

(M)en come to Thailand with money, and this gives them a feeling of great power and strength. It is strange how many of them are transformed, in their own imagination, into victims: they, the conquerors, the invincible, wind up feeling they have been cheated, their 'innocence' taken advantage of, their good-heartedness exploited. It is a strange reversal of reality.⁸⁶

Another way in which sex tourists see themselves as victims is through sex ideologies. By sex ideologies I am referring to gender roles, norms and ideals. Throughout the world, sex ideologies are transforming; in many parts of the world, this transformation has given women greater equality, rights and opportunities. Internationally, feminism has played a dominant role in these shifting sex ideologies. The increasing popularity of sex tourism has occurred in part due to a backlash against feminism and its connected values and principles. The backlash against feminist values and principles was present throughout many conversations with sex tourists, either implicitly or explicitly. This theme also runs throughout sex tourism advertisements and brochures, assuring men that Filipinas do not have unrealistic expectations unlike their Western feminist counterparts.⁸⁷ Sex tourists, particularly men who have

⁸⁵ Jeremy Seabrook, *Travels in the Skin Trade: Tourism and the Sex Industry* (London: Pluto Press, 1996), p. 4.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "The Internet and The Global Prostitution Industry," *Women In Action*, No. 1 (1999), p. 77.

relocated to the Philippines, see Angeles City as a playground in which men regain dominance; this dominance is achieved by their relative wealth (class), race and sex.

Another common theme in conversations with sex tourists consisted of comparisons between Filipinas and 'Western' women. Through these comparisons, the 'meek', 'mild' and 'submissive' characteristics of Filipinas were seen as highly desirable traits of a woman as well as traits that Western women have lost. Men expressed frustration at feminism and saw the movement as personally denying them the right to a 'proper' and submissive wife. Within the comparisons was a firm identification of poverty as the main reason why Filipinas are so 'meek', 'mild' and 'submissive'. This lack of choice due to poverty and family responsibilities binds prostituted women to these characteristics. Women have had to adopt (or pretend to adopt) the characteristic of submissiveness towards male sex clientele in order to survive.

The backlash against feminism in the sex industry is not unique to Angeles City but occurs internationally and can be viewed in many niches throughout the sex industry. The practice of mail-order brides (the Philippines is one of the main suppliers of mail-order brides) is greatly connected to the backlash. One such advertisement states, "Do you like Canadian women? I mean face it, they have an attitude."⁸⁸ This stands in stark contrast to the Filipina whose "views have not been ruined by unreasonable expectations."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ "Blazing Trails, Confronting Challenges: The Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls in The Philippines," *Network Against Trafficking in Women*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2 (January-June 1998), p. 11.

⁸⁹ "The Internet and The Global Prostitution Industry", p. 77.

Sex tourists would frequently reminisce about a time when 'men were men' and 'women were women.' In essence, this lament was directed at a wish for gender roles in which males held the power; it is this 'power over' that men feel that they have lost and thus seek when they participate in sex tourism. This 'power over' can be viewed in the men's actions and attitudes directed at prostituted women; men venture to sex tourist destination nations to exercise this 'power over' and partake in actions and attitudes they would not be able to participate in, in their home nations. Men seek this power over prostituted women, which is solidified by the discrepancies of race, class, gender and culture between prostituted women and sex tourists, yet, through a reversal of reality, the men project their experiences as victims.

The sex tourists' tendency towards victimization and justification can be understood through the theory of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance theory examines the experiences resulting from actions conflicting with beliefs.⁹⁰ When a person's beliefs are at conflict with their actions, tensions arise. In order to deal with such tensions, a person will change their behaviour, seek out new information or rationalize the behaviour to the point in which such actions would fit in with a person's value system.⁹¹ If a behaviour, such as participating in sex tourism, is advantageous to the person, then the person is most likely to reduce cognitive dissonance by changing their thinking to come in line with behaviour. Cognitive dissonance, or justification, can be viewed in the sex tourists' dehumanization and othering of Filipinas, in the reliance of

⁹⁰ Russell N. Cassel, *The Psychology of Decision Making* (North Quincy: The Christopher Publishing House, 1973), p. 91.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 91.

poverty to justify their presence, in reversing the roles of victim and exploiter, and in blaming Western women for changing gender roles that deny them of their personal rights as men.

An Invisible Network

Sex tourists typically participate in a loose network consisting of other sex tourists and business operators in a system of camaraderie. Camaraderie is an important element of sex tourism as it acts as a system of protection, justification and normalization for the sex tourists. In many ways, this camaraderie acts like the camaraderie in existence in the military by reinforcing masculinity, male 'rights' to female sexuality, solidifying racism and sexism in an us/them dichotomy and protecting men from 'slipping' out of the sex tourist mentality.

This camaraderie occurs at all stages of the sex tourism experience. As was explored earlier in this chapter, the first stage of camaraderie typically takes place over the internet. On the internet, potential customers become familiar with the sex tourist mentality. This includes familiarization with the sex tourist destination countries, the racist and sexist stereotypes of women in a process of othering in these nations, the normalization of the commodification of women's bodies, the legitimization of the sex trade as well as men's participation in sex tourism. The sex tourist mentality also includes the 'etiquettes' of sex tourism, and the normalization of viewing women's bodies in terms of price and product

rather than as human beings. This is the first stage of sex tourism camaraderie as potential tourists not only become familiar with the trade but also begin to converse with other sex tourists. This 'buddy' system hooks up potential clients with experienced sex tourists who 'look after' the sex tourist interests.

Yet another manner by which the sex tourism camaraderie begins its first stage is through military exposure. In the military, R&R normalizes the commodification of women's bodies as well as the notion that men have sexual 'needs' that must be fulfilled. This notion of men's rights to sex justifies the commodification and exploitation of women's bodies as a 'necessary' service.

Jan Jindy Pettman has noted that

Militarized prostitution is seen as providing for the (hetero)sexual needs of the (male) soldier, rationalized in different ways as 'boys will be boys', as maintaining morale and rewarding long overseas service, and (less explicitly) as protecting and defusing the intense and intimate homo-social living of the base by providing a 'safe' outlet. There is also a racialised, as well as sexualized subtext here. The soldiers' use of foreign (to them; local, actually) women may also play a role in the elaboration of their own identities...and so consolidate the very boundary of national difference that they are crossing for sex.⁹²

Through participation in R&R, men have become conditioned towards sex tourism, exposed to sex districts around the world and regard male 'needs' for sex as normal and justified. Military prostitution and sex tourism are intrinsically linked in the Philippines; not only did Clark provide the infrastructure for sex tourism, it also provided an established clientele who were already familiar with the sex district.

⁹² Pettman, *Worlding Women*, p. 202.

The second stage of sex tourism camaraderie can be viewed along the streets of the sex tourism district. It is in the sex tourism destination nation in which the strongest elements of the male bonding occur. Bonded together by race, class, gender and age, sex tourists often unite in an us-against-them dichotomous mentality as a form of protection, justification and the reassertion of their privileged positions. Along the strip of Fields Avenue, the main sex tourism area in Angeles City, sex tourists seem to gravitate towards one another and they mutually reinforce the normalization and justification of sex tourism, their hierarchal power over prostituted women, their consumerist ethics and their notions of masculinity in which they believe sex is a right and women's bodies are a commodity. Surrounded by like-minded individuals, sex tourists 'protect' one another from questioning their roles as sex tourists

The last stage of camaraderie occurs when sex tourists return home; at this point the sex tourists become teachers of other potential sex tourists. From the student to the teacher, the sex tourists then participate in the perpetuation of sex tourism by participating in websites and chat-rooms dedicated to sex tourism, by posting sex diaries of their experiences and sometimes, by expanding their participation by conducting sex tours for the expansion of the industry. By entering into this third stage of camaraderie, the tourists continue the cycle and ensure that new 'recruits' are 'properly prepared' to perpetuate sexist and racist notions of oppression and exploitation. From my experiences with sex tourists, there seems to be a high rate of repeat visits to sex tourism destination nations

so as to continue to relive their fantasies, to be in a position of power over women, and to commodify race and sex through prostitution.

The reactions, attitudes and explanations of sex tourists were often contradictory in nature. While male bonding, camaraderie and invisible networks are important aspects of sex tourism and prostitution, another important, yet contrary aspect of sex tourism is the act of separation or distinguishing from the sex tourism group. There was recognition of exploitation as a critical element of sex tourism and prostitution; most men I spoke with recognized this exploitation was a primary reason for participation in sex tourism by other sex tourists. It was common for sex tourists to express opinions such as “the other men are bad, but I’m different” or similar sentiments.

This recognition of wrong (but denial of being in the same grouping as the ‘other’ men) was a typical assertion, expressed to me probably because of the cultural reminder I played. My very presence created a rift in opinions, values and actions. My presence served as a cultural reminder of gender and race; sex tourists often reacted to my presence as if I had ‘thrown them for a loop.’ This usually created one of two responses: avoidance or an almost tangible need to justify their own presence. Sex tourists rely on camaraderie, male bonding and invisible networks to educate themselves, to find support as well as to justify their actions and attitudes and to serve as a form of protection. However, when it suits them, sex tourists also rely on distinguishing or separating themselves from other sex tourists. This occurs by vocalizing and portraying the ‘other’

guys partaking in exploitative actions and attitudes, with recognition that this exploitation is wrong. When men openly recognize the high levels of exploitation consistent with sex tourism and prostitution, it is typically accompanied with a strong denial that they are part of this category.

Sex Tourism Business Class

The business class that owns, supports and promotes sex tourism is an essential element to the existence of sex tourism. Business operators, who own and operate entertainment establishments and secondary industries, support and benefit from the exploitation of women through sex tourism. Key players in the entertainment industry are usually from the same countries as the majority of the sex clientele. Though by law only a Filipino can own a business in the Philippines, foreign men sidestep this law by marrying Filipinas and establishing the businesses in their wives' names.⁹³ Not only does this allow foreigners to own a business, but also it protects them from being held liable for exploitative conditions and illegal proceedings. On paper the establishment belongs to the wife; it would be she who is held accountable.

In Angeles City, many of the bar owners and managers are American or Australian. Some of the owners, managers and clientele are retired American military who now live there or continue to visit periodically. BUKLOD, an Olongapo based NGO, states that bar owners tend to be "upstanding members

⁹³ During my internship in the Philippines, WEDPRO made this discovery and are currently exploring the extent as well as the implications of this legal loophole.

of their community- the Lion's Club, the Rotary Club, American ex-navy and local government officials."⁹⁴ This isn't surprising, considering that in 1987, 55% of the Angeles City local government's total revenue came directly from the entertainment industry.⁹⁵ This figure does not account for all the profits made through secondary tourism industries.

The business class in the entertainment industry is comprised of bar owners and bar managers; both categories in the sex tourist district tend to be foreigners. Bar owners and managers come from all over the world to profit from the exploitation of Filipinas. I met managers from Europe, North America, South America and Australia. In fact, one bar manager I met grew up in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

I'll profile just one of the managers. Peter was from England; I met him shortly after I had arrived in the Philippines. Upon hearing the reasons I had come to Angeles City, he seemed more than happy to give his opinions on sex tourism, prostitution and the entertainment industry.

According to Peter, bar managers are paid "quite well," and he was making better pay as a bar manager than he had been in England. Peter seemed kind to the women he managed yet he seemed to lack basic human respect for them. He described the women who worked for him as "having the mentality of two year olds." During our conversation, there were only five customers

⁹⁴ *Hospitality- What Price? The U.S. Navy at Subic Bay...And The Women's Response* (Olongapo: BUKLOD Center, 1990), p. 13.

⁹⁵ Lynn Lee, *From Carriers to Communities: Alternative Employment, Economic Livelihood and Human Resource Development for Women in the Entertainment Industry* (Manila: WEDPRO, 1992), p. 28.

present in the bar. Peter was unconcerned since tourist season was not due to start for another month. He said that it was not unusual to have to shut down the bar during peak tourism season because all the women are bar fined. Peter does not believe in penalizing women if they choose not to go on bar fines; he does, however, believe in customer satisfaction if the woman does go out on a bar fine. He described many different situations in which he acted as ‘diplomat’ when an unhappy customer returned after a bar fine. He blamed these situations on two accounts: the women were not being honest with the customers or there was a sexual incompatibility. He would go out of his way to correct both such situations.

Peter clearly enjoyed his employment and thought of the bars as a place of salvation for the women who work in the entertainment industry. He reiterated that most of the women were poverty-stricken and lacked an education; the bars, he argued, raised the women’s quality of life and gave them opportunities they would otherwise lack. Though he is originally from England, he has not been back in over a decade and has no desire to return to his native country.

As was explored earlier in this chapter, the bar owners and managers are intrinsically linked to the sex tourists: typically they originate from the same nations, most share the same race and most have become exposed to sex tourism through similar means, either through the military, by the internet or by word of mouth. Like sex tourists, the business class share in a network that protects their interests. However, unlike sex tourists, this network is far from invisible.

On several occasions I viewed bar owners in communication with upper government officials in Angeles City; bar managers are 'respectable citizens' in positions of authority in the community and they have organized into a group to protect their interests. The business owners are perceived as 'respectable' citizens, their businesses bring in more than half of the city's revenue, they are an essential link to this form of development and they argue that women gain a greater quality of life than they otherwise would. With these elements firmly in place, the business class is becoming entrenched within the community and have succeeded in legitimizing (and, to a smaller degree, normalizing) their presence.

Chapter Four:

Women In The Entertainment Industry

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the situations and lives of women involved in prostitution and the entertainment industry in the Philippines. This chapter focuses on the micro, or local levels of prostitution and sex tourism in the Philippines by examining the actual situations of women in the sex trade as well as exploring entertainers' individual experiences working in sex tourism. This information was collected through interviews with women who work in the entertainment industry. Included in this exploration is an examination of the women's economic and familial circumstances, their employability, their work in the entertainment industry, the effects on women who work in the bars, the conflicting identities they experience, the women's opinions and experiences with other sex actors, the levels of choice women feel they had, as well as their future dreams.

Women, Economics and Their Families

Why are women working in the bars in the sex tourism district in Angeles City? To a large degree, women's responses focused on the well being of their families. Poverty of families is the number one reason for working in the bars for nine out of fifteen of the interviewed women; however, the poverty of families was mentioned in every case but one as a reason for working in the

bars. Most of the women I had the opportunity to interview (as well as many of the women I informally conversed with) were very centred on the goal of providing better lives for their families; most women never strayed very far from these concerns and desires. While the interviewed bar women were highly concerned with finding employment in order to sustain their families, this concern went much deeper than simply bringing home a paycheque. Many of the women I spoke with felt the responsibility for caring and providing for families. The women sought to provide hope, an education and a future for their siblings and their children.

Due to the poverty, women search for employment in order to provide for their families and provide an education for their siblings. Though education is technically free in the Philippines, many families can still not afford to provide schooling to their children. Between the transportation costs, the school supplies, uniforms and lunch allowances, it simply proves too expensive and inaccessible for the poorer families. Many families of the women who work in the bars could not afford to educate them. This lack of an education has affected the women in the bars, who on average have an educational attainment of second year of high school (equivalent to grade 8 in North America). It was frequently mentioned that even securing a job in retail or working at McDonald's required high school graduation. It is interesting to note that when I spoke to a handful of McDonald's employees in the Philippines, every employee had completed high school, and most of them were currently attending a university or college.

This lack of money to achieve greater education weighs heavily on women because they claimed that their lack of education was one of the primary factors for working in the bars. Many of the women are desperate to support their families, but are unable to obtain employment elsewhere. The recognition of the importance of an education was often attached to their hopes for their siblings and children; many of the women hope to support their siblings and children in their education so as to ensure that they have more options and do not end up in a similar situation. Regine stated: “I have a broken {separated parents} family of six. I have three brothers and sisters that should go to school and I am supporting them. My mom has no job, I had no choice.”

Like Regine, many women who work in the bars are trying to fill the gap of a missing parent. While female heads of households comprised 11% of total Filipino households between 1985 and 1990,⁹⁶ the interviewed entertainers showed high percentages of female heads of households in comparison. Nine out of fifteen interviewed entertainers are from single heads of households; the majority of which are female headed. Of these nine women, two-thirds of the respondents have had one parent die when they were growing up while one-third of the respondents are from single headed households resulting from separation or abandonment of a parent (typically the father). Many women working in the bars are also single mothers with just under half having children. In some cases the children live with the women’s mothers, in other cases the children live with them.

⁹⁶ “Women’s Time and Labour: Double Shift and Multiplex Burdens,” *Trade Intensification in Asian Economies: What It Means To Women’s Work* (Philippines: International Gender and Trade Networks, 2000).

Women are working in the bars primarily to support their families, but few of them feel as though they have other options. Most of the women lack a high school education and most are from the rural areas. The economic choices of rural women are limited; and women's unemployment continues to rise in disproportionate numbers to men's unemployment.⁹⁷ Not only do women have a more difficult time finding access to employment, but they are also subject to discriminatory wages. A study performed in 1993 showed that in all labour areas, women earned only 35% of what men earned.⁹⁸ The situation has been made worse by Structural Adjustment Policies implemented by the World Bank; though wages were low as well as discriminatory against women, the World Bank sought to restrict pay increases.⁹⁹ World Bank structural changes thus curtailed the further development of gender equality in the Philippines, even though eliminating gender discrimination was formally recognized and prioritized under the 1987 Constitution.¹⁰⁰

The increasing employment rates of Filipinas largely correlate with the increasing vulnerability of households;¹⁰¹ however, women continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty. Over 70% of women in the Philippines live in poverty.¹⁰² Work is sought both in the formal and informal sectors, in their communities, urban areas or by transnational migration. Women from

⁹⁷ *Halfway Through The Circle: The Lives of Eight Filipino Women Survivors of Prostitution and Trafficking* (Quezon City, Philippines: WEDPRO Inc, 1998), p. ix.

⁹⁸ Lynn M. Kwiatkowschi, *Struggling With Development: The Politics of Hunger and Gender in The Philippines* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998) p. 54.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁰¹ "Women and Trade in Agriculture,"

¹⁰² Michelle J. Anderson, "A License To Abuse: The Impact Of Conditional Status on Female Immigrants," *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol. 102, No. 6,

rural areas often migrate to Manila in hopes of finding a job in order to support their families. Such women (like many of the women I formally interviewed) are vulnerable to entering into the sex tourism and prostitution industries.

Women who work in the bars often feel contradictory emotions; they often express a blend of alienation along with close family ties. Family networks and contacts are extremely important in the Philippines; one owes a great deal of responsibility and care towards one's family. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, women are faced with conflicting cultural and sexual ideologies. Encouraged by cultural and gender norms and values, women's main role is still seen to be within the household. Reproductive duties are seen to be their main task, while forms of productive employment are often seen as an extension of their roles when the situation requires.¹⁰³

Most of the women in the entertainment industry share similar backgrounds; most are working in the bars as a means of supporting their families, children and themselves, they come from rural areas and large families, and many have the responsibilities of filling in the economic gap of a deceased or absent parent, a parent who could not work because of health problems or parents who could not find jobs. Most of the women come from large families and have six or seven siblings; ten out of fifteen women are the oldest or second oldest child and expressed the importance of caring and providing for their siblings. The idea that they are trading their lives to ensure that their sisters do not have to go through the same experiences has been a

¹⁰³ Maria Sagrario Floro and Kendall Schaefer, "Restructuring of Labour Markets in the Philippines: Gender Dimensions," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 33, (Fall 1998), p. 92.

central focus of many of the respondents. They want to break the cycle of poverty and hope that their sacrifices will ensure greater chances for their siblings through greater educational attainment

While the poverty of families is the number one reason to begin working in the bars, some women are completely on their own and are independent, some by choice, and others through personal circumstances. Six of the interviewed women began to work in the bars as an independent; half of these women are single parents with no other means of income while the other half do not want to accept help from their families and are trying to make it on their own.

Though in the minority, several of the interview participants have experienced sexual abuse and rape as children. These women highlight the Catholic priority placed on virginity. The women regard the loss of virginity as a symbol of their worthlessness; they have been used. Mary has experienced these feelings of worthlessness as a result of having been abused for most of her life and being raped at a young age. After these experiences she felt worthless and unfit to marry. Mary mumbled that “(I am) not worth anything, since my body has been used...I am scarred.”

Whether the women work to support their extended families, their children or because they have no support from their families, their family ties are intrinsically linked with their reasons for beginning to work in the bars. The connection between economics and family circumstances is directly linked to the cultural importance and idea that women are responsible for the welfare of

their families. Many of the women willingly make this sacrifice while praying that their sisters and daughters will be spared the same fate.

Searching For Work

Upon being introduced to the situations of women in sex tourism in the Philippines by WEDPRO, I was told that WEDPRO's prior research demonstrated that the majority of women in the bars come from the Southern, poorer provinces of the nation. In the Southern provinces, the poverty is more widespread and there are fewer opportunities for employment. Though this has been true in the past, my research found differing results. Out of the sample of women I interviewed, six of the women were from Pampanga, the province where Angeles City is located. Upon presenting these results to WEDPRO, the activists seemed troubled. In the past, due to the stigma of working in the bars, it was rare for women from Pampanga to work in the entertainment industry because they are much less likely to be able to hide their identities and to secure the secret of their means of employment. It was felt by WEDPRO staff that this shift indicated increased vulnerability of Filipinas coupled with the continuing growth (and perhaps growing legitimacy) of sex tourism.

In order to discover how women learned about the entertainment industry, I have divided the women into two groups: women from Pampanga and women outside of Pampanga. Those women who had grown up in Pampanga would obviously have more exposure to sex tourism and the entertainment industry.

Therefore, I was more interested in how women from Pampanga began to work in the bars with the additional information and knowledge of the entertainment industry. Before beginning the interviews, I believed that women from Pampanga would have made a more conscious decision to begin to work in the entertainment industry than women outside of Pampanga, who would have been looking for more general employment.



Bars are constantly advertising and searching for new recruits into the sex tourism district.

All but one of the women who grew up in Pampanga grew up with the knowledge of the sex industry; these women had known about the bars all their lives. They were more directly introduced to the bar scene by friends or neighbours who worked in the bars. Though most felt they did not have any other choice, women from Pampanga made a more conscious decision to work in the entertainment industry as they had additional information as to what this entailed.

Andrea is from Pampanga but she is the only participant who grew up in the region with a lack of awareness of the entertainment industry. Running from repeated child abuse, she left home with no money and no place to turn. She moved in with her sister for a short period but was kicked out because of her insistence that sexual abuse had been committed against her. She came to Angeles City in the hopes of finding a way to survive. For a while she lived on the streets where she suffered from repeated violence and rape. With no one to turn to, no money and no food, she learned of the jobs in the entertainment industry and applied. After a few days of working in the bars she found a roommate and moved off of the streets. Andrea stated,

I had no food, no place to sleep, no clothing and no money. I had to work in the bar to survive. I was kicked out by my family and had no place to turn. I was new to Angeles and did not know the area. I did not know of any organizations to go to and I needed to eat.

While most women from Pampanga grew up with the knowledge of sex tourism and the entertainment industry, women from outside of Pampanga learned about the entertainment industry from relatives, friends or were exposed to the entertainment industry through other means of employment. Just under half of this group did not know that they would be working in the bars. These women were promised jobs of all sorts, mostly consisting of waitressing, domestic work and sales jobs. Most of these women had to be told what the entertainment industry entailed. Details such as bar fines and dancing in bikinis shocked them and many expressed an immediate desire to leave. Though they were not physically restrained, they had no money to return home, their families

were poor and usually reliant on the daughters to start sending income back to the provinces. Paula found herself in such a situation; she stated

At first it was really hard, putting on the bikini and dancing around. It was really hard to go topless. I wanted to go home the first night; I didn't want to wait. I wanted to board the bus that night back to Manila {but she lacked the money}. But the other girls told me it got easier after a couple of days and it did.

From the nine women who were not from Pampanga, two were brought to Angeles City by an aunt. Girls from the provinces are often sent to Manila to live with relatives in order to find employment, which is often sought in domestic labour. However, if they are unsuccessful in finding a job (as is the case of this segment of the research group) they are sometimes brought to Angeles City to work in the bars.

Four out of nine women, who grew up outside of Pampanga, were brought to Angeles City by friends. As the women described their circumstances when hooking up with the friends who brought them to Angeles City, these "friends" sounded more like recruiters who had befriended the women and promised them employment. Though the women still refer to these people as friends, they had often mentioned that they were innocent and too trusting.

There was another instance in which one bar was staffed completely by women from Leyte, a small Southern province. The owner/manager of the bar was also from Leyte. Though unverified, the reports seem to suggest recruiting networks on the island. Women I spoke with who worked in this bar described being offered a job outside of Manila and it was not until they arrived that they were told what their job descriptions were. Two women I spoke with were

specifically told that the job would be waitressing. Once they became aware that they were to work in the bars, it was too late for the women to escape. With no money to return to their homes, they were trapped in these circumstances. Though some women are tricked into working in the bars through misinformation and false promises, some women do know that their employment will be in the entertainment industry but accept this as a way to make money in the hopes that this will increase the standards of living for themselves, their children and their families.

As was mentioned above, some of the women were not aware of the entertainment industry before coming to Angeles City. Many believed that the jobs offered them would be waitressing, domestic help or sales jobs. When referring to the job market and the difficulties of finding a job, the high majority of women would stress the importance of an education. Eleven of the fifteen interviewed women stressed that a good education was the primary factor in finding a job that could support themselves and their families. Education was one of the most important factors mentioned throughout the interviews, whether or not the questions asked were directly related to education or not. One respondent summed up the general opinion that

It's very hard to find a job in the Philippines, especially if you do not have an education. Education is the most important thing. I want my children to graduate, so that they can have options, so that they can get jobs and have a good life.

Working In The Entertainment Industry

Sex workers in the entertainment industry are euphemised as 'entertainers' or 'hospitality women' and work in establishments that front as legitimate businesses. The entertainers work in a go-go bars, massage parlours, karaokes, nightclubs, lounges, saunas and other 'legitimate' businesses under the job descriptions of dancers, guest-relations officers, hostesses and waitresses.

In order to work at such 'legitimate' establishments, the women must be registered, prove that they are of age and receive an STD check every week to ensure they are 'clean.' Though prostitution is illegal, these waitresses, cultural dancers and hostesses are subjected to a weekly vaginal smear in order to secure the customers of their cleanliness. Upon inspection, the women are presented with an updated health card, which they pin to their bikinis when they work. Each bar has a regularly scheduled day in which all the women attend the Social Hygiene Clinic to receive STD checks. Without this weekly check, they are fined by the bars and cannot work until they have received their smear. The only exception to this schedule occurs on Fridays; when women who are 'cherry girls' or virgins from all the bars receive their smears.



Women dance on stage as men scope out their options.
Visible on some of the women in this picture are Health Cards
(pink cards pinned to bikinis) from the Social Hygiene Clinic.

Though registration is supposed to ensure that minors are not employed in the bars, in reality, it is easy to forge proof of identification. Entertainers I spoke with complained about the practice of hiring minors, as young as 14 and 15 years of age. They spoke of how Mamasans (aka Madams) changed birth certificates of the minors by using a copy of a birth certificate of a previous employee. Others forged the information themselves by using an older sister's or cousin's personal information. The youngest entertainer I conversed with started working in the bars when she was 14 years old. While she was the youngest worker I spoke with, Andrea was the youngest woman I formally interviewed. Andrea stated,

I started to work in the bars when I was 16. The Mommy [Mamasan] knew but she faked my birth certificate and stated that I was 19 years old. The owner and daddy [manager] knew too. They told me to lie, that I needed to, to the PNP [Philippine National Police] or I would get in trouble and they

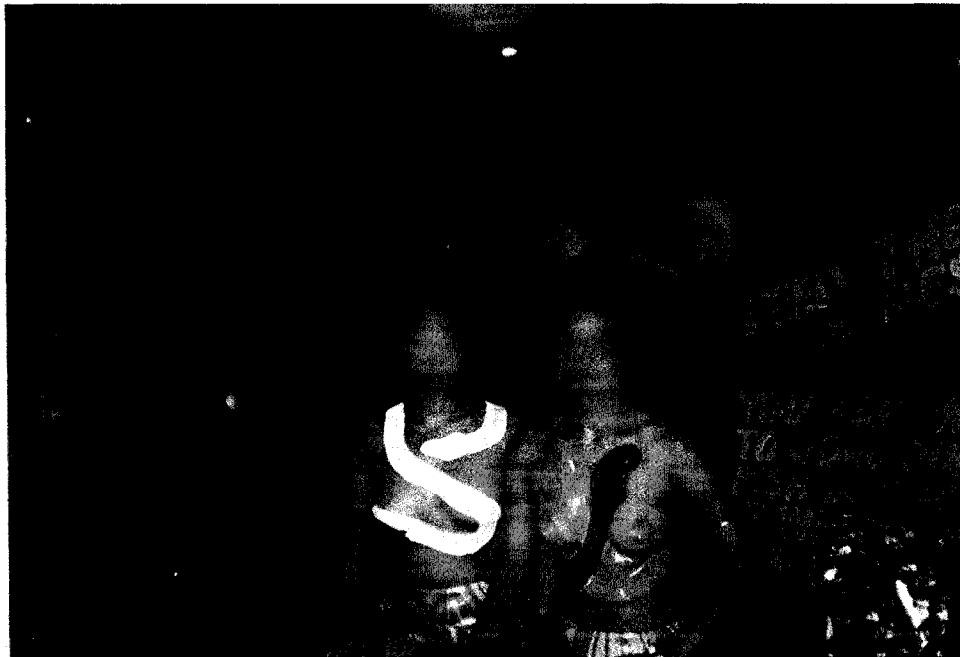
would close the bar.

Andrea further stated,

This is not the normal way to treat the young. I wanted to stay there [at the bar], I wanted to work, not as a prostitute [she was a waitress at the bar]. I don't want to be a prostitute. But they pushed me in the bars to get bar fines. Because if there's no bar fines, there's no income for the bars and their business goes down. Bars open for bar fines and illegal activities [occurring in the back]. People went back there but we weren't allowed to. I don't know what they did, maybe buy shabu [drugs] or gambled.

Women in the entertainment industry cater to both Filipinos and foreigners; however, the entertainment industry in the Philippines tends to be largely segregated, with Filipinos and foreigners occupying different establishments and areas. While entertainment industries catering to Filipinos span the country, the establishments catering to foreigners are found in 'touristy' locations. In the sex-tourism destinations in the Philippines, such as Angeles, Manila and Cebu, the areas are lined with flashing neon lights and glitzy signs. Inside women dance in bikinis in 20 to 30 minute shifts, spending the rest of their time pleasing and socializing with men. Many bars impose a quota system where women must have a certain number of ladies drinks bought for them and/or have been bar fined a particular number of times per week/month. The bar acts as a place where men come in, check out their options, have a few drinks, perhaps buy some ladies' drinks and pick out a woman.

The bars also hold 'specialty shows' in an attempt to attract customers. Specialty shows are held at various bars and involve a multiplicity of sexual topics. Some shows centre around wet T-shirt contests, others involve body painting and coordinated dancing. One bar has adopted an aqua theme. Women dance in an aquarium, covering their breasts with beach balls. Beside the aquarium, a sign informs the customers that they can "feed the fish for a peso," (roughly, 50 pesos equals one American dollar). When a peso is thrown into the water, the women dive down to retrieve it, revealing their bare breasts.



"Feed The Fish For A Peso"- Just one of the specialty attractions
in the entertainment industry in Angeles City

If a man decides on a particular woman, he pays her bar fine. Officially the fine is a fee that is paid as a penalty by women (who are given the money by men) for leaving her shift early; it is compensation to the bar for losing an able worker. The establishments argue that they do not support prostitution; they only seek this compensation if a woman does leave during her shift. Despite

these assurances from bar management personnel, the practice of customers returning to the bar to get back the bar fine due to dissatisfaction with the level of sexual gratification received was mentioned not only by women working in the bars but also by customers and bar managers. Not all women who work in the bars go out on bar fines, however, a clear majority do. Of the women I interviewed, twelve out of fifteen went on bar fines.

The Effects of Working in The Entertainment Industry

The women acknowledged that working in the bars had changed them; however, there were varied ways they identified this inner change. Most responded that they had lost their innocence. A loss of innocence can be viewed in two manners: first of all, most of the women were still teenagers and virgins when they began to work in the bars; however, the realities of the bars meant that they had to grow up quickly in order to survive. Second of all, a loss of innocence implies a Biblical meaning by which women have recognized that they have strayed outside of the three proper roles for women in the Catholic Church. This second meaning can be viewed in descriptions of their 'loss of innocence' as well as other self-descriptions utilized by prostituted women. They often view themselves as 'bad' women or as *pangit*.

Women are referred to and refer to themselves as *pangit* or ugly; this description of ugliness is much more than skin deep. Mina Roces, a researcher

on gender and power in the Philippines, explores the concept of beauty and conversely the lack of beauty in the Philippines context. She states,

Images of female power stress beauty and religiosity, tying the women's role to that of moral guardian or *maganda*, a word which does not simply mean beautiful but also refers to behaviour that is considered socially acceptable...Conversely, the word for ugly [*pangit*] is used to describe behaviour that is socially unacceptable.¹⁰⁴

Others identified a wildness that they had never before experienced. This 'wildness' includes taking drugs as well as drinking alcohol. In the Philippines, alcohol use is typically regarded as a male behaviour. The identification of a loss of innocence as well as a wildness hints at the breaking of accepted gender norms; they have not acted as a 'proper' woman should act. By their words and views, it is clear that the women are well aware of these gendered discretions.

Andrea stated,

I miss being innocent. I used to listen to soft music, drink soft drinks and go to church. Now it's different. There's drugs and alcohol. I needed to be strong, even if I didn't want to. If you're not strong, you'll die there....

Other women identified an inner strength as the biggest change in them. This strength is viewed not as positive, but as a necessary condition of working and surviving the bar scenes. From their words, it would seem as though strength and innocence are viewed as opposites in a spectrum. While innocence was viewed as the ideal, strength was viewed as a necessity for the entertainment industry. Andrea stated, "I have become tough, and strong. I face everything. This can't be the real life for me." Sally also identified

¹⁰⁴ Mina Roces, "The Gendering of Post-War Philippine Politics," in *Gender and Power in Affluent Asia*, ed., Sen. Krisha and Maila Stivens (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 295.

strength as a necessity for working in the bars; “I have to be strong, and I have had to stop thinking about my circumstances, what I’m doing. If I thought too much about it, I think I would go crazy.”

Still others identified their improved economic status as the biggest change in them. The women valued being able to support their families, being able to educate their siblings and being able to improve the situations of their families. Lyla commented, “I am more valued and important to my family. Only my work supports my family. I feel the responsibility.”

When asked about the largest change in them after beginning to work in the bars, most of the women responded to the question with a package of responses. Many of them seemed disturbed with the changes in them and often spoke of their lives before working in the bars with nostalgia; many times I had the sense of mourning for their former lives. Andrea replied,

Change? I wish I was still the innocent one. There’s too much change in my life. All of it. Personality. Attitude. My whole life. I didn’t know anything, I was totally innocent. Now I know everything, even if I don’t want to know.

Conflicting Identities

Working in the sex tourism district in Angeles City is psychologically, physically and spiritually challenging. Conflicting emotions, values, perspectives and ideologies create an enormous amount of pressure for women in the entertainment industry. By identifying the best and worst aspects about

working in a bar, some of the contradicting ideologies, values and gender norms can be glimpsed in the psychological and social pressures entertainers face.

Identified as the worst aspects of working in the bar by entertainment workers include: violence or the possibility of violence, public perception and stigmatization, demanding physical requirements (long periods of dancing), the treatment of women by the bar management personnel, the possibility of contracting STDs, being mistreated by customers, being forced to partake in unwanted sexual activities, the refusal by customers to wear a condom, being forced to go on bar fines and a lack of stable income (fluctuations of the tourism season). Women stressed the lack of control they have in the bars and on bar fines; through the fears and experiences they spoke of, it is clear that women in the entertainment industry are extremely vulnerable to violence in all forms and by all of the sex actors who hold power over their lives.

Bina recalled beginning her work in a bar, alluding to the hardships she endured before she was able to build up a protective barrier, either through changing values, drugs, alcohol or support networks. She said,

Before I was innocent, I am not innocent anymore. Before I couldn't dance and I was very, very shy. I didn't know what a bar fine was, the mamasan had to tell me. I was so surprised; I cried and cried. I started to cry when they first took me to the hotel room, especially when I was naked.

Sally said, "The hardest thing about working in a bar is the bar fines. You don't know the man, who he is. He could hurt you, or kill you. You don't know. There is nothing we can do". Women stressed the unknown, not knowing what may happen or what they may be exposed to or forced to do.

Bina showed a lot of concern over violence throughout the interview; she stated, “You’re dealing with your life. It’s dangerous; they could kill you.”

Public perception and stigmatization weighs heavily on the women; sometimes the women dismiss it while at other times it is clear that they are bothered by the ways they are viewed by the general public. Andrea stated, “Working in the bars is too hard, people think of you as too small, smaller than ants.” The women are thought of, both by society and often by themselves, as bad women. They do not conform to gender roles and are largely dismissed by society. Marlene touched on this subject when she stated,

I don’t belong there. I feel like I am in hell; it’s so embarrassing.... I feel like shit, like I’m nothing. I feel so ashamed; I couldn’t look at people the same.

Sally further elaborated on the issue of stigmatization by referring to her own biases before beginning to work in the bars as well as her own views of popular public opinions surrounding the entertainment industry. She stated

I had thought that women who worked in the bars were bad without understanding. Now I am here and people think that about me. They show many shows on TV, showing how bad we are and people believe it. I can’t blame the children who think that though, they watch the TV and that is what we believe. But I just can’t think about it too much. I don’t want to think about it because I do not want to be here.

Others recognize the public perceptions and stigmatization directed against them but defend their actions adamantly. Bina responded “I don’t mind what they comment, as long as I’m not stealing and such. I’m working in an honest way. They should recognize that.” Lyla replied,

I know that working in the bars is bad. I always thought the women who worked in the bars were bad, without understanding. Now, because of what happened to me, I understand. But I don't care what my neighbours think. I support my family, I don't ask them {her neighbours} for money or food. They should mind their own business. I don't want to work in the bar, but I have to support my family.

Andrea replied by saying, “Just because I work in a bar doesn’t mean I like it! Not all women who work in the bars like that sort of thing. It doesn’t matter that we work in the bar; we are humans. They should treat me like a human!”

There were only three positive aspects identified by the women of working in the entertainment industry: the money, their friends and the potential of meeting a foreigner to marry. These responses revolve around two key areas: the main reasons women are working in the bars and survival strategies the entertainers implement to cope with their situations. Almost half of the entertainers I interviewed identified money as the best aspect of working in the bar, which is hardly surprising as most women are working in the sex trade due to extreme poverty. Most identified education as the primary benefit of their earnings, whether the primary beneficiaries were siblings, children, or (in a few cases) themselves.

While working in the bars provides a short-term solution to their poverty, women working in the bars often view marriage to a foreigner as a stable means of securing their families’ well being while also serving as an escape from the bars. As Nova stated, “You can find a man to pull you out of the bar.” As most women are driven into sex tourism through poverty, the hope of finding a

financially stable (comparatively rich) man to remove them from the bars while supporting their families is an extremely attractive and common fantasy. Marriage to a foreigner seems to occur just often enough to keep women's hopes alive.

Being surrounded by their friends was identified as the best aspect of working in the bars by six of the interview participants. Though the main reason women work in the bars is to support their families, due to public perception and personal shame, the majority of women do not tell their families where they are working. Nine out of fifteen women have not told their families that they work in the entertainment industry, many of these women have not even told their families they are in Angeles City. It is common for the women to instead tell their families they are performing domestic labour in Manila. Some of the women who have not kept their means of employment secret have 'lost' their families. The women therefore feel isolated and alone in a culture where family ties are of utmost importance. In order to combat this feeling of isolation and loneliness, the women in the bars have created their own families with their co-workers, often viewing them as sisters.

The women in the bars act like pseudo-families and serve as a support system. With their co-workers, the women do not have to worry about being judged, feel no need to keep secrets and offer each other monetary and psychological support. Regine remarked, "It's like a family. Like we're all broken. Women have children but not the fathers of their children. We all talk about it and we all cry". The bonding that takes place between women who

work in the bars is a primary coping mechanism; through these relationships, women combat public perceptions and stigmatizations, which are typically held against them. When the bars are not busy and there is more time for fun, the women can be viewed in bonding moments. The women generally have a good time; they laugh, joke and tease each other, as well as dance together. During these moments, the true age of the women (many of them teenagers) shines through. This is not exclusive to the Philippines, as pointed out by Lillian Robinson in her study of prostitution in Thailand. She has claimed that watching prostituted women interacting with one another is very much like watching two children from junior high.¹⁰⁵

While the interviewed women identified money as one of the best aspects of working in the bars, this is complicated by a lack of stable income, the mistreatment of women by bar staff personnel, violence and possibility of violence, public perception, demanding physical requirements and being forced to go on bar fines. The potential to marry a foreigner is diminished with the possibility of contracting a STD, being mistreated by customers, being forced to partake in unwanted sexual activities and men refusing to wear condoms. Though being surrounded by their friends was also identified as one of the best aspects of working in the bars, this is a survival or coping strategy utilized by the women to decrease their isolation, loneliness and their general feelings of worthlessness. Women also attempt to cope with their situations by drinking alcohol and using drugs. Among the drugs mentioned by women who work in the bars were marijuana, Shebu (which is a low quality cocaine product) and a

¹⁰⁵ Robinson, "In The Night Market", p. 493.

drug referred to as 'X' (which may be ecstasy but this remains unclear). Yet another coping or survival strategy used by the majority of the women is the adoption of pseudonyms while working in the bars, to conceal their identities. The adoption of pseudonyms also acts as a coping strategy insofar as it offers partial distancing for the women. Instead of their true selves participating in sex tourism, they can utilize their aliases to partially feel as if they are someone else; the pseudonym serves as a form of distancing mechanism.

Prostituted Women and Sex Actors

In *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, Cynthia Enloe examined four conditions necessary for sex tourism to flourish which relied on the four sex actors of the sex trade: women, sex tourists, the business class and the governments. One of the purposes of the formal interviews was to examine prostituted women's experiences and opinions regarding the other sex actors. Included in this examination are Mamasans, managers, and bar owners who make up the bar management personnel, sex tourists and the local government.

When speaking with the women regarding the other sex actors who impact their lives, the underlying principle of their experiences and perceptions was the issue of power. The women who work in the bars are highly aware and most are clearly frustrated by the lack of power they hold. They often expressed frustration at the sex actors who benefited from their work, their exploitation and their lack of choice. The women typically supported the bars with caution

because they could not see an alternative. They typically work in the bars to support their families; this is their primary objective and their principle concern. Yet they often expressed a desire to be able to support their families without having to work in the entertainment industry as well as frustration at the lack of options they had.

The women clearly recognized that bar management personnel made money off their bodies every time they went on bar fines while not having to face the possibility of violence as well as the general lack of accountability the bars held when women were harmed. They recognized the extreme power sex tourists had over them once they were bar fined as well as the sense that sex tourists owed them and could exploit them at will and they recognized the high levels of revenue the local government made from the existence of the entertainment industry. They recognized that it was others who benefited from this system while it was they who faced the consequences.

Bar Management Personnel

Women working in the entertainment industry have mixed opinions as to their experiences and views with regards to bar management personnel. These personnel include mamasans, managers and owners of sex tourism bars and clubs. The conditions of the bar and the women's experiences with bar management personnel greatly affect women's overall experiences of working in sex tourism. Most women pointed out that their experiences and opinions of sex tourism were directly connected to which bar they worked at and the staff that managed them (mamasan and managers) at the time.

When asked about working in the bars, most women identified five main categories with which they judged their personal experiences and opinions of their work places: whether or not they were forced to go on bar fines, how they were treated by management if they were sick, how they were treated and what (if any) actions were taken if they were mistreated by customers, the level of information and supplies offered and the practice of hiring minors. While some women had a favourable view of their own workplaces, they had many stories and second-hand knowledge of bars that were highly exploitative, creating a situation of complete vulnerability for many women.

Whether or not they were forced to go on bar fines was the most commonly mentioned category. Andrea said, “The mamasans get money if you go on a bar fine so they push you, especially if you’re a cherry-girl { virgin}”. Women spoke of various levels of abuse such as being yelled at or having things thrown at them when there weren’t enough bar fines, while others concentrated on the lack of security they faced daily, such as being fired for no apparent reason. Andrea has experienced several levels of abuse by bar management personnel. She stated,

They push you, always push you. Once the owner pushed me to go out with a guy but I didn’t like him and did not want to go. The owner got really angry because the customer was his friend. I did not want to go so he yelled at me and then fired me.

Another common categorization was the treatment of women when they were sick. While some women had positive experiences with bar-management, such as being given extra money for medicine, being granted time off without

worry over losing their jobs, and (in one situation) being sent home with pay, others experienced complete disregard for their welfare. In these cases, management personnel would often refuse to allow the women to leave if they were ill. If the women insisted, they were fined for leaving early (this fine was typically the bar's share of a bar-fine, usually equalling two to three times the amount a woman would make at work in a night). Cynthia recalled,

My Mamasan is not nice with the girls, she is more worried about the customers than our health. She will push women to go with men they don't like just so the bar makes money. Once I was dancing and had a high fever, I just couldn't {dance} anymore. I told the mamasan but she would not let me leave, she did not care. She said 'It's Friday night! You can't go, there are lots of customers!' I had to leave, so she charged me P500.

Getting sick was a prime concern of women in the entertainment industry. They were concerned with the expense of medicines, of not being able to work to support themselves and their families during their sickness as well as the concern of not being allowed to take time off when they needed to recover.

Cynthia stated

Bars earn a lot of money because of us without doing anything... If workers are dead, they can't help us. And it's [the money] not enough if you get sick or pregnant. It's not good to be a prostitute if you get sick. The bars can treat you bad and it [the money] isn't enough for doctor's bills and the bars will force you to go. What about us? It's not fair.

Another category women used to determine their personal experiences and opinions of the bar personnel was the treatment towards them and the actions taken by the management personnel if (when) women were harmed by customers. While some management personnel largely dismiss the women's

complaints as trivial, her fault or a lie, other management personnel are slightly more active in protecting the entertainers. Andrea said, “If something bad happens, they tell you just not to go with the man anymore. But they will not help you go to the PNP {Philippine National Police}, because it’s bad for the customers, so bad for business.” Cynthia also experienced violence at the hands of a customer. She stated,

Before when I was a cherry girl {virgin} a customer tried to fuck me but I fought him and he hit me. I told the Mommy {Mamasan} but she didn’t do anything. I was hurt, tired and scared and I was eighteen only. She said ‘You just don’t know how to entertain him’. She blamed me because I didn’t know anything.”

Some women stressed the importance of the level of information and amount of supplies offered by management personnel. Among the information and supplies referred to were information on STDs, HIV and condom use, and providing a level of counselling, such as being open to listening and offering advice. Women’s experiences were varied; while some bars regularly reminded women to use condoms as well as the consequences of not using one, others did not seem to care one way or the other. Andrea observed, “They push you on customers, but if you go with them and something happens, it’s your fault! If you get sick from them, it’s your fault”. Many of the women brought up the idea of fault when it came to this question, emphasising that they were the ones to carry the brunt of the consequences as well as the blame.

Women also complained about the lack of accountability of the bar management personnel through knowingly hiring minors. Entertainers often spoke of mamasans who changed the birth certificates of the minors by using a

copy of a birth certificate of a previous employee. Caren stated that “They [bar management personnel] can be nice but many are bad. They hire minors who are 15 or 16 and they change their papers.”

Cynthia declared that by hiring minors, the bar management are proving that they hold no accountability. She stated:

The bars are taking advantage of the women because they force women to go out on barfines, that’s how they make money. There are minors working there, at least four of them. Two are only 15, they are still children. The bar uses them, but I pity them. They are too young and they think that because they get money, it is good for them. They are too young to know better.

Andrea denied any level of accountability of bar management personnel to women in the bars, connecting this lack of accountability with the desire to earn money. She stated,

There is no accountability for the bars. I worked there, but when I got sick, no one helped you. They give no protection; they only give advice. If you get pregnant they advise and help you get an abortion instead of recommending the women to go back to the provinces. My friend was fired because she refused to go out with a man. She did not like him but he was a friend of the manager. ‘The customer is always right!’

From conversations I had with the women, it is clear that the personal attitudes of the bar management personnel had a great effect on women’s lives. Depending on their attitudes directed at women, the women may suffer higher levels of exploitation, increased potential for violence, elevated exploitation of minors and greater vulnerability through the level of power women hold in relation to the sex tourists in the bars, and to a smaller degree outside of the

bars. In light of this conclusion, it shows that women's experiences in prostitution and the sex tourism industry are interconnected to the personal attitudes and actions of bar management personnel.

Sex Tourists

While many of the women developed relationships with certain sex tourists in which they stayed in touch, felt close to and safe with (and many held the desire to someday marry a foreigner), women also expressed fear and aversion when speaking about sex tourists in general. In regards to sex tourists, the most common concerns women evoked were the potential for violence, physical abuse, being viewed as a commodity and men's unwillingness to wear condoms. Women also showed a high level of awareness of the discrepancy in power between themselves and sex tourists.

Four of the women I spoke with reported being physically abused by sex clients, however, only one woman filed a complaint. Regine said, "An American customer was drunk and hit me in the bars. I ran away and told the Mommy [Mamasan] but she accused me of lying, said I was telling stories. She got mad at me and nothing was done." Women, who were physically abused by sex clients, reported being grabbed, slapped, stabbed, being partially choked, and burned with cigarettes. Though only four women reported being physically abused, the fear of physical abuse was a recurring theme throughout the women's responses. Sally said, "You don't know who he is. He may be crazy, he may want to hurt you, and he may murder you!" The worst aspect identified

by prostituted women regarding sex clients was the unknown. What the women would experience, what the customers would demand and what potential dangers they may face, was repeatedly spoken of by the women.

Women spoke of customers' views of the women as commodities lacking basic rights. This point of view is also repeatedly expressed in sex tourism marketing but these attitudes come to full meaning in the treatment of prostituted women by sex tourists. Andrea spoke of this commodification of women,

Sometimes the client is abusive by the amount of use they expect of you. They only pay 1000p and they expect sex. sex, sex. Others use you once or twice, but some demand that they paid for you and demand sex over and over and over again. They give you no tip, no money for transportation back home and will not let you eat. Inside your body is dead, and you're so tired, and they keep demanding more sex. I have been forced to do sex acts I didn't want to do. I said no, but they didn't listen, they paid for me so they were going to do what they wanted. For humans, that's rape, but not for us.

Over the past few years, various nongovernmental and governmental programmes have increasingly pushed the use of condoms. The bars typically provide women with condoms and they are educated on the proper usage and reasons for utilizing condoms. Most of the women I spoke with have become adamant users of condoms; however, the sex customers have not, for the most part, become as educated on STDs and birth control, or simply don't care. All of the women I spoke with who went on bar fines have experienced difficulties in convincing men to wear condoms. Many have adjusted to this by clarifying with the tourists that they will not have sex without a condom, before leaving

the bar. Many others refuse sex and suggest to the men that they can either wear a condom or return them to the bar and recollect their money. While eight out of twelve women who went on bar fines wore condoms regularly, three of the women wore condoms on a semi-regular basis. Only one woman who went on bar fines did not use a condom at all.

Only one woman interviewed reported having experienced STDs. Andrea, who wore condoms semi-regularly, stated, “Yes, I’ve had a lot, including gonorrhoea. But I was lucky that when I got sick I had money to pay for it. I got really sick once from a STD and was in the hospital for over one month. It hurt a lot and cost a lot of money. But I’m lucky, I don’t have HIV.” The fact that only one woman of the interviewed women reported having an STD was a great surprise to me and did not seem to fit with the conversations I had with people who worked with the Social Hygiene Clinic and Peer Counsellors, however, women I spoke with were quite forthright when speaking of sex, STDs and other extremely personal topics. Therefore, though I was surprised, I have little reason to doubt these results.

Despite the negative experiences women have had with sex tourists, many of the women hold onto the dream of marrying a foreigner and leaving the Philippines. This remains a dream due to the fact that women can see no way out of their situations. Most of them will continue to work in the bars until they have become too old and then will probably begin working in the informal sector, many as street vendors. Street vending pays less than the bars, and the women will still have families to support. The dream of marrying a foreigner

brings with it stability, a means to support their families outside of prostitution as well as an escape from poverty. Regine stated “Filipino men, foreign men, they will treat you the same. They will hit you and treat you like shit. Might as well be with a foreigner and not worry about being poor.”

Some of the women also referenced sex tourists’ needs to believe that women have a choice to work in the bar, enjoy their company and are happy with their occupations. Sally spoke in length regarding the disillusionment of these beliefs. She spoke of her experiences where customers were confused by her reactions and reacted with shock when she admitted that she did not like her job and did not want to be there. When she made these confessions, they would typically move on quickly. The truth in her words seems to have shattered their comfortable picture of what the entertainment industry was and what their roles were within the industry.

The Local Government

Though local ordinances have been put in place by the local government that set up regulations and guidelines for ‘entertainers’ and the entertainment industry, prostitution is illegal in the Philippines. Prostitution in the nation is defined as an illegal activity partaken by WOMEN. In the Revised Penal Code (RPC) of the Philippines, Article 202.5 penalizes vagrancy and prostitution. The article states, “for the purpose of this article, women who, for money or

profit, habitually indulge in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct, are deemed to be prostitutes.”¹⁰⁶

Due to the difficulties in proving sexual crimes, Article 202.5 is typically used to charge women with vagrancy instead of prostitution. While staying in the Philippines, two teenage girls I had befriended were charged with vagrancy. While these girls were neither vagrants nor involved in sex tourism and prostitution in any way, the two girls spent the night in jail because they had been on the streets hanging out later in the evening. Vagrancy laws, used in lieu of prostitution laws, create a situation in which all women are vulnerable towards such charges.

Though prostitution is illegal in the Philippines; Angeles City continues to be treated as the ‘brothel of the Philippines,’ with sex serving as the main reason for tourists to visit the area. A Visitor’s Guide to the Philippines approved by the Department of Tourism, informs interested tourists that

There are over 50 go-go bars full of attractive and readily available women eager to show you a good time....
Recreational sex is the sport of choice. You can get loaded and laid regardless of your age, weight, physical appearance, interpersonal skills, wealth or social class.¹⁰⁷

Despite advertisements and promotions for sex tourism, the long history of military prostitution, the large amount of foreign currency which equals 55% of the local government’s revenue and the regulations mandating weekly vaginal smears of entertainment workers, the local government has stated several times

¹⁰⁶ “Decriminalizing Women in Prostitution,” *Network Against Trafficking in Women*, Vol. 2, No. 1-2 (January-June 1998), p. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Welcome To The (Mabuhay) Philippines: Visitors Guide Department of Tourism Philippines October-November 2001 Mabuhay Publishing, Manila p. 131.

that there is no prostitution in Angeles City. When asked about the local government's declaration, the women responded with cynicism, a sense of rejection as well as disillusionment. Sally asserted,

The local government knows what is happening, so does everyone else. But they pretend to be blind and deaf to how the women are treated. They don't want to admit it because they make too much money from the bars and from the tourists who come here to go to the bars. They like the money; they are corrupt. They don't care about the women.

While the women clearly disagreed with the government from their own experiences, they also offered reasons why the government may have made such statements. Among the reasons the women shared were: the government makes too much money from the entertainment industry through taxes and corruption to jeopardize the industry; the government is trying to protect the image of Angeles City from an association with AIDS, and a decline in tourism and; the government wants to show that they were doing their jobs.

Both Angeles City and Olongapo City have traditionally been places of prostitution and sex tourism, which catered to the R&R of American military personnel. However, after the withdrawal of the American military in 1991, Olongapo City concentrated on the eradication of the entertainment industry. Today Olongapo still serves as a tourism destination; however, government officials have promoted their natural resources and their culture as reasons for visiting the city. Angeles City, after a recession, began to rely on sex tourism even more heavily. Instead of looking into other options, the city simply diversified the sex tourism district. Women are utilized as the natural resource

by which to attract tourists and foreign revenue. Andrea expressed frustration by stating:

I question the government. Why do they invest money in areas for bars instead of investing in factories to make clothing, to teach the women to sew or something, to give us skills; a place for women to support their families. It is because the government makes a lot of money from the bars. They use the women in the bars, but we have no choice. Many have no education, have not graduated high school. There are no other options, except street vending.

Sally held a similar criticism of the local government concerning its investments and priorities,

It is very hard to find a job in the Philippines, especially if you don't have education. It's so hard, and the government spends money to support the bars, instead of investing it in factories or other places where women can work to support their families and acquire skills.

There are many contradictions in the sex tourism sector. One such contradiction is the manner by which the local government relies on the revenue from the entertainment industry but denies the prostitution that attracts sex tourists. One such reason the women feel the government is able to survive with this contradiction is because of the class of people who are harmed by prostitution. While the government denies the existence of prostitution to the majority of its citizens, the entertainment industry relies on women who live in poverty and who lack power. Jocelyn stated,

There is prostitution in Angeles City and the government knows this but they do not care. They only care about money. It is the poor people who work in the bars. These people don't have money so they [government] do not care about it.

The Concept of Choice

The concept of choice when working in the bar was a controversial subject. The number of women who felt they had a choice to work in the bars was evenly split with women who felt they had no choice. Women felt that choice was a concept that was difficult to define and often put a great deal of thought into the question before answering. Women who felt that they did not have a choice whether or not to work in the bars mentioned education and economics as primary reasons for being denied this choice. They would mention their lack of education before connecting economics with family circumstances; they would point out the large numbers of people within their family they were attempting to support, but with their level of education, the only thing available to them was the bars. The weight of dependents weighed heavily on the women and they stressed the need to offer support to their families above all else. Sally pointed out that

I didn't have a choice! I had children to support and it's very hard to find a job here. Maybe if I didn't have children. They are most important. I never thought I would work in the bars and I never understood women who did. I thought they were bad without understanding; now I know. I had no choice; neither do most of the women who work in the bars. They are supporting their children or family in the provinces.

Half of the women felt they did have a choice to work in the bars but mentioned obstacles that made it difficult to work elsewhere. Among the obstacles mentioned were a lack of education, poor wages and racism. Minerva,

a Black Amer-Asian, has found racism difficult to overcome. She had worked performing other jobs, including sales, but found that racism was extreme.

When she began to work in the bars, she found the racism less severe in the bars than elsewhere.

Most of the women who believed they did have a choice whether or not to work in the bars recognized that other women they knew who worked in the bars did not have this same choice. As Jocelyn stated,

To have a choice is to be in a situation where your family is not poor and you can get enough education to support yourself and your family. If you don't have the education, you still have a family to support. What other 'choice' is there?

Aida Santos, a Filipino feminist who works with WEDPRO and is an advocate for women in the sex trade and trafficking, has stated

The question of 'choice' verses 'forced' has become a modern day framework that misses out the fundamentals in human rights. There are few that would consciously seek out their own hells, their own pains, and even deaths.¹⁰⁸

Hopes For The Future

As the last question was asked, she looked away into the distance. She was quiet for a moment before mumbling "One day, one day...." With these words she smiled but said no more.

The final question in the interview regarded the women's hopes and dreams for the future. While these dreams varied, there were many similarities between the women. The most common hopes and dreams for the future

¹⁰⁸ *Halfway Through The Circle*, p. xi.

regarded education, opening a small business, traveling, providing for their families and marrying a foreigner. Most of the women incorporated all four elements into their dreams for the future. When asked about their future hopes and dreams, nine of the women wanted to ensure an education, whether it was an education for their siblings, children or themselves.

Four of the women hoped to open a small business one day. Paula responded by saying, “My future dreams are to go back to school. Someday I want to own a business. I want a restaurant and café with billiards.” Trina, too, wants to own her own business; “I want to own my own business, and do farming. I want to be able to finish my children’s education.” Sally also holds dreams of owning her own business,

My future dreams are to save up enough money and then go back to my province. I will open a store to sell jewellery and dresses, as my mother had done [before she died]. But someday I would like to finish college. I want to leave the bars; I don’t want my daughter to grow up with me working there. I don’t want my daughter to work in the bars.

Other similarities between the dreams of the women were the aspect of security, safety and simplicity. Marlene states of her dreams, “I want to marry a foreigner so he can take me out of the bars. I want to be stable, secure and not have to worry so much.” Andrea stated,

Before I dreamt of a simple life with a small house, a husband, kids and a farm. But I just can’t seem to get this. It’s too hard to get the simple things in life. I always seem to fail. Now, I want to finish my school and finish college. I want to apply at a big building and work. I dream high because people treat me so bad that I want to go high, to do it on my own.

More than anything else Cynthia wants to “finish my studies and go back home. But I don’t know if I can go back home.” Though she had attempted to keep her employment a secret, her sister had found out that she was working in the bars. Since this has occurred, she has received repeated messages from her provinces, which call her *puta* (roughly translated to bitch) as well as dirty. She hopes that this will diminish and someday she will be able to return to her province to live a simple life.

Regine has incorporated several of these elements into her future hopes and dreams. She remarked, “I want to leave the bar and have a husband who is a good guy. I would like to have a house and support my brothers and sisters. Someday I wish I could travel.” Similarly, Jocelyn said, “I want to marry a foreigner, have children and go abroad. I want to send money to my family and help to support them. I want my brother to finish his education.”

Anna does not hold many future dreams for herself; her hopes centre on her family. When asked what her future hopes and dreams were, she stated, “For myself? I don’t know. I guess a good family and a simple life. Nothing more. For my family, I want my brothers and sister to return to school.”

Many of the dreams of the women encompassed various elements of these dreams. The majority of women explicitly mentioned a desire to leave the bars, while the other women implied this. Lyla’s dream was “Primarily to get out of the bars and have a new life.” I asked how she plans to leave the bars and she responded, “I’m praying for it!”

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the history of sex tourism and prostitution in the Philippines as well as the roles the actors of prostitution have played in the continued development of the sex trade. Throughout this thesis I have examined the roles, benefits and consequences to the various actors in the trade in order to demonstrate the true effects of sex tourism and prostitution. Throughout this research, a pattern has emerged; while three out of the four categories of sex actors directly benefit from sex tourism, only one category, the women, are burdened with the consequences. In this final chapter, I wish to reiterate the linkages in history that have led to the perpetuation of the exploitation of Filipinas as well as the roles of the categories of sex actors.

The current situation of the entertainment industry in the Philippines has grown out of the legacies of colonialism, militarization, and patriarchy. These macro factors have intertwined with cultural values, religion and gender dichotomies to shape and mould social practices and economic realities to form and sustain an exploitative system under which prostituted women in the Philippines are entrapped. The economic growth of the Philippines has been based on the backs of Filipinas; this reliance on women can be seen in the R&R establishments, in sex tourism and other areas (i.e., the mail-order bride industry

and the reliance on remittances from overseas foreign workers, the majority of whom are women).¹⁰⁹

The exploitative practices, which rely on Filipinas as a means to achieve economic development, did not spring out of nowhere; the growth of sex tourism and prostitution has relied on linkages with the past that have contributed to the current situation. The sexual exploitation of Filipinas is intrinsically linked to colonial influences, militarization, economics, globalization, patriarchy, cultural factors, religion and defined gender roles. These factors sustain a patriarchal system, which commodifies women into oppressed, sexualized and racialized roles in order to meet and create profit from the 'needs' and desires of men around the world. Sex tourism will continue to grow in exploitation as each development initiative followed at the expense of women not only sets precedence for such actions in the nation but also gains legitimacy and normalcy. Thus, the longer this trend is sustained, the more difficult it becomes for women to fight for fairness and true equality. This pattern has to be recognized and dismissed as exploitative before women become part of development and not just the 'natural resource' on which development initiatives are built.

Development and economic growth in the Philippines have been pursued through the sacrifices of women. When sex tourism is accepted as a normal means of development, there are many winners. The government benefits from the influx of tourists who bring valuable foreign capital and who spend money in secondary but related areas throughout the industry; the business class

¹⁰⁹ *Halfway Through The Circle*, p.6.

benefits from the direct exchange of money for sex and the sex tourists benefit from being offered a forum through which they can enact their fantasies and instil power over others in an 'acceptable' arena.

While sex tourists feel a sense of entitlement to women's bodies, and thus to partake in sex tourism, while the business class and the government profit from the sexual violence of women, it is the women who are systematically exploited. The commodification of women's bodies occurs to suit the purposes of men, whether this purpose is sexual (the sex tourist), economic (recruiters, bar management personnel, government) or political (government). Women are assigned the subordinate positions in prostitution as men exert power in an expression of masculinity. As women in prostitution remain socially disadvantaged by power relations of class, gender and race, as well as the added social stigma of being a prostitute, it is they who remain most vulnerable to physical, sexual and psychological violence.¹¹⁰ The commercialization of Filipinas' bodies is widespread, from marketing and advertising to entertainment and tourism. The perpetuation and continued growth of sex tourism perpetuates "miseducating new generations of boys and men into sexual consumerist attitudes and behaviours."¹¹¹

It is the women who lose in the sex tourism destination nation; it is the women's sexuality, their well being, their self esteem, their Catholic souls and sometimes their very lives which are being traded for the benefit of others (these others are almost always men). It is the women who are being treated as natural

¹¹⁰ Hoffman, p. 11.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

resources and on whose bodies the very industry relies. It is the women who bear the brunt of negative connotations and stigmatization of the prostitution industry. The stigma of prostitution is gender specific and marginalizes these women into even more vulnerable positions throughout their lives. Women are the ones identified in prostitution as the continuous perpetrators of the sex trade. Not only is this bias held by Filipino (and to a large extent the international) society, but also by Filipino law, which specifies prostitution as a crime, committed by women.¹¹² While women are shunned by society for their role in the sex trade in a Catholic society, the roles of men remain largely unquestioned and viewed as natural; this allows the continued sexual exploitation of women to take place.¹¹³

Women flock to the entertainment industry not because they want to pursue employment in sex tourism but because they feel as if they have few options. The poverty of their families has kept many of them from receiving an adequate education; it is this cycle of poverty that they hope to break, perhaps by ensuring that their children or their siblings receive a proper education. The women enter the sex trade as a form of trade-off; they are trading their Catholic souls in the hopes that their families will be able to have greater opportunities in their lives.

The women have accepted this life for themselves because they can see no other options, except marriage to a foreigner. That this is the only option available to them explains why so many of them dream of this fate. Marrying a

¹¹² "Decriminalizing Women in Prostitution," Network Against Trafficking in Women, Vol. 2, No. 1-2, 1998.

¹¹³ *Halfway Through The Circle*, p. ix

foreigner means an escape from the bars without persistent poverty following them. To defeat both poverty and the entertainment industry is a dream that keeps many of them going: they need to hope or dream for something better than what they've come to know.

Some of the women I interviewed asked why the government would continue to build infrastructure and support the bars when they could be investing the money in areas where women could find a decent job with enough pay to support a family. They questioned why the government of a Catholic nation would support sex tourism in the first place. It is for the same reason that bar management personnel push women to go on bar fines, and the same reason men feel justified in pushing women to commit acts they are uncomfortable or unwilling to partake in: it suits their monetary and sexual interests. The people in power benefit from this system, either directly or indirectly, and thus it would not be in their interests to challenge the sex trade industry by providing wide-scale alternatives to prostituted women.

By laying blame on the people with the least power, it leaves the system in place, the elite intact and gender norms and values becoming even further cemented. The group with the least power is the very group least able to fight back, to truly represent themselves and to shed light on the power, hierarchy, exploitation, sexism, classism and racism that the sex trade relies. Because the emphasis, stigmatization and blame are projected at the women without any attention being diverted to the other sex actors of sex tourism, and because women are the ones with the least amount of power and the least resources to

share their opinions and experiences, NGOs in the Philippines, such as WEDPRO, have been making concrete efforts to share women's views and bring them into the public eye. This thesis has been written for the same purpose; it is my hope that this research will educate the public with a greater understanding of sex tourism and prostitution, the roles of the sex actors and the women's views, opinions and experiences.

Sex tourism in the Philippines is not a Filipino issue, but an international issue in desperate need of address. The longer this issue remains hidden, the longer the exploitation of women will continue. Though the location may be the Philippines, sex tourists come from around the world, including Canada. Sex tourism is extremely commercial in nature and follows the principle of supply and demand. It is only through this recognition and through an examination of the demand side that prostitution will be able to be extinguished. Therefore, the exploitation of women in the Philippines must be examined as an international issue. The longer this issue remains invisible internationally, the longer women will be exposed to this exploitation.

Most of the women I spoke with accepted this fate for themselves in the hopes of providing better lives for their siblings and children. The women are trading their Catholic souls and young lives for the chance that the younger generation may be able to escape this cycle of poverty. They work with the hope that the children will be spared this fate.

Terminology

Ate

Ate is Tagalog for eldest sister.

Bar fine

Officially, the bar fine is a penalty paid by a woman for leaving her shift early; it is compensation to the bar for losing an able worker. In reality, men choose a woman, pay the bar fine and then typically take the woman back to the hotel to pursue sexual activities.

Cherry Girl

Cherry Girl is slang for virgin. This expression is regularly used in the bars.

Filipina

Filipina is the word to connote a female native of the Philippines.

Ladies' Drinks

Ladies' Drinks refer to alcoholic beverages bought for the women in the bars by sex tourists. Women receive a certain amount of money for every ladies' drink purchased for them.

Mamasan

A Mamasan serves as the immediate manager to women in the bars. She is typically a Filipina who has worked in the bars, and, due to her age and experience, has been 'promoted' to her current position.

NGO

NGO is the acronym for Nongovernmental Organization. NGOs serve a wide variety of charitable, political and social causes. WEDPRO is one such NGO.

Prostituted Women

Prostituted Women is a term utilized in the Philippines (and is increasingly used internationally) to emphasize that prostitution is an action done to women. The term prostituted is used to deflect attention solely from women to incorporate the exploitation these women face, the systems that support and promote the sex trade and to increasingly emphasize the other actors of prostitution.

WEDPRO

An acronym for Women's Education, Development, Productivity and Research Organization. WEDPRO is the NGO where I worked during my internship in the Philippines.

Interview Survey Conducted for WEDPRO

2001-2002

1. **Name:**
2. **Age:**
3. **Place of Birth:**
4. **Employer:**
5. **Occupation:**
6. **Length of employment:**
7. **Where did you work before your current job?**
8. **How did you find out about your first job in a bar?**
9. **Who brought you to Angeles?**
10. **Before coming to Angeles, did you know you were coming to work in a bar? If no- What did you think your job would be?**
11. **What is your salary per month?**
12. **Do you have many bar fines?**
13. **Are you a cherry girl? At what age? Who?**
14. **How much do you make on a bar fine?**
15. **How much do you make on a ladies' drink?**
16. **How many are in your family?**
17. **Are you the ate?**
18. **Do your parents work? What are their jobs?**
19. **Where did you study? What college did you attend?**

- 20. Do you have children?**
- 21. Are you single/married/have a boyfriend? If yes- Where is he from?**
- 22. Is it hard to find a job in the Philippines?**
- 23. What was the main reason you decided to work in a Bar?**
- 24. How did your family (circumstances) affect this decision?**

Economics? Social Attitudes? Personal Values?

- 25. Did you have a choice whether to work in the Bars?**
- 26. How do you define choice?**
- 27. Have you ever been arrested? Under what circumstances?**

Have you been detained by the PNP? How did the police explain the detention? Have you ever been extorted against?

- 28. Do your parents know you work in a bar?**
- If no- Do they know you work in Angeles?**

What do your parents think you do?

- 29. What would they think/say/do if they knew where you work?**
- 30. Has a client ever hit you? Been violent in other ways? Up to what degree**

- 31. Do you think you are in a position to file a complaint against customer behaviour? Have you ever filed a complaint?**

- 32. Do you use a condom?**

- 33. Do some clients refuse to use a condom?**

If yes- What do you do if clients refuse to use a condom?

- 34. Have you ever had a STD?**

- 35. What do you think of the local government's declaration that there is no prostitution in Angeles City?**
- 36. How do you feel about the word entertainment industry when used to describe establishments offering sex work?**
- 37. What is the difference, in your opinion, between the entertainment industry and prostitution?**
- 38. How do you see the accountability of the establishments?**
- The Mamasans?**
- The owners?**
- The Daddies (Managers)?**
- 39. Do you think that the Bars are taking advantage of the women?**
- 40. Do you think the entertainment industry should be legalized, decriminalization or criminalized (penalizing the institution)? Why?**
- 41. How would this affect you? Other girls working in the bar?**
- 42. The situation now with the Bars, is that it is almost legalized. How do you think that this has affected the women who work in the Bars?**
- 43. What is the hardest thing about working in the bar?**
- 44. What is the best thing about working in the bar?**
- 45. What is the biggest change in you, after working in the bars?**
- 46. Do you send money home to your family?**
- 47. What are your future dreams?**

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