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“YOU IS A WHORE YOU NO WORTH NOTHING”

Stigmatisation of Jamaican women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution

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Abstract

The purpose of this report was to explore the process of stigmatisation of Jamaican women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution in Ocho Rios, Jamaica. I wanted to examine how these women perceived themselves, other prostitutes and the tourists using their services as well as briefly examine professional viewpoint on these dimensions. Further I aimed to assess the stigmatisation of these women through their lived experiences of responses from local people. I found that the women were stigmatised in various ways and that there were hierarchies within the industry. The women were mainly involved in tourism-oriented prostitution because of the money and their perception of tourists was, most often, a positive one since tourists usually paid more money for sexual services and behaved nicely.

KEYWORDS: tourism-oriented prostitution, sex tourism, prostitution, sex work, stigma, stigmatisation, Jamaica, the Caribbean, post-colonial, feminist, self-perception

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Sara Helmersson

Introduction

Problem at Issue

When backpacking in Southeast Asia two years ago I observed repeatedly how Western male tourists engaged themselves with local Thai, Vietnamese and Cambodian girls and women. My reaction to the presence of the tourism-oriented sex industry was negative although I was curious to further explore the prevalence and the dynamics behind the phenomenon. The field of tourism-oriented prostitution is under-explored and by conducting this study in Jamaica, sharing the stories of a number of local women who are involved in the industry, I hope to create a new base of knowledge about these women's situation as well as the field (Oppermann 1998:3). I have hence chosen to do a field study about tourism-oriented prostitution in Jamaica since I find this phenomenon interesting and important to highlight.

Pettman (1999:9) claims that exploring tourism-oriented prostitution means:

Asking questions about relations between sex and power, men and women, First and Third worlds, and relations across national, racialised and cultural boundaries.

In this study I will not be able to fully illuminate all of these dimensions and, as the title of the report shows, I aim to shed light on this particular developmental problem focusing on experiences of stigmatisation and self-perception of Jamaican women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution (Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed 1999:148). I will also look at the hierarchies that exist within the industry. Since Jamaica has a colonial past and my preconception is that women who make a living from prostitution generally are stigmatised and perceived negatively by society I have found it appropriate to use postcolonial as well as feminist perspectives (Kempadoo 2004:1).

Major Objective

To explore the process of stigmatisation of Jamaican women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution in Ocho Rios.

Specific Objectives

- To assess lived experiences of stigmatisation among Jamaican women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution.
- To examine how these women perceive themselves, other prostitutes and the tourists using their sexual services.
- To examine professionals views on the phenomenon of tourism-oriented prostitution.

Research Methodology

Design

This is a non-experimental explorative case study, concentrated to a tourist resort town on the north coast of Jamaica named Ocho Rios (Hilte 2001:11; Neuman 1999:21). When conducting a case study it is possible to explore uncharted issues by starting with a limited case and concentrating on a particular phenomenon to capture the specific factors involved (Bell 1993:43; Reinharz 1992:167). Neuman (1999:33) states that case studies can help researchers connect the micro level (actions of individual people) to the macro level (large scale social structures and processes).

As the nature of my objective mainly concerns issues regarding self-perception and experience of stigmatisation from the public, I have found it appropriate to do primary research and use a qualitative method instead of a quantitative method. Qualitative style means constructing social reality and focusing on interactive processes (Neuman 1999:16). This field study was conducted from October 2004 until January 2005 and includes mixed methods such as in-depth interviews, observations and an intense study of relevant literature. In doing this I aim to share the women's stories and create a knowledge base in order to increase the understanding of their situation (Halvorsen 1992:82). Apart from the observations and the interviews that I will present in this report, I took part in various activities that helped me to create a broad understanding and fuller insight in the area. For example I joined a HIV/Aids workshop for sex workers held by Jamaica Aids Support (JAS). JAS is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation working to preserve the dignity and rights of persons living with HIV/Aids as well as to help the fight against the spread of HIV/Aids by providing education and other interventions (www.jamaicaaidssupport.com).

Focused In-depth Field Interview

This kind of interview involves asking questions, listening, expressing interest and recording what was said. I had prepared a set of interview-questions in advance but I tried to keep an open and flexible attitude during the interview situation (Appendix). I used a tape recorder for fourteen of the interviews and transcribed these word for word. For the other two interviews I took notes. In this kind of interview situation, the researcher and the interviewee are both active participants and the interviewer's presence and form of involvement is integral to the respondent's account. The explicit purpose of the interview is to learn about the informant and the setting. The field interview therefore differs from a friendly conversation (Devereux & Hoddinott 1992:36; Halvorsen 1992:86; Neuman 1999:370,372).

Limited Participant Observation

While being close to the women and interviewing them I observed the way they looked during the interview and how they interacted. Further I have been in the field observing the settings the women were in. To share more dimensions of the case I have integrated these observations in my analysis (Halvorsen 1992:83).

Written Material & Critique of References

The writings and research about tourism-oriented prostitution in Jamaica is limited and it has been quite the challenge to find material about the case. Research about tourism-oriented prostitution is generally speaking focusing on other aspects such as HIV/Aids and child prostitution, not stigmatisation, self-perception, hierarchies and perception of tourists.

My main theoretical basis consists of the extensive and leading academic research about tourism-oriented prostitution in the Caribbean of Kamala Kempadoo and her co-workers. Kempadoo has been in the field for more than ten years and she is associate professor in Latin American and Caribbean Studies in Canada. Kempadoo's and her colleagues' work often describes tourism-oriented prostitution in the Caribbean, but although the region has a similar history with colonisation and foreign European powers the Caribbean is far from a homogenous concept (Kempadoo 2001:43). The conclusions made might therefore not be entirely valid for the Jamaican context. Another critical reflection is that their sample

selection, as well as my own, sometimes might not be representative and perhaps the results would come out differently if the sample i.e. included street prostitutes¹.

Method of Selection

Through my field supervisor Dr Ian Boxill at the University of the West Indies I was put in contact with Patricia Russle and JAS in Ocho Rios. Prostitutes are one of JAS's target groups and the only well known organisation in Jamaica working with this population. I met the women in a nightclub and in a bar in Ocho Rios, sites JAS are in contact with. The sampling selection was unstructured and I simply interviewed twelve women who were willing to talk to me about their experiences without receiving money for their contribution. As for the professionals I chose four persons who are closely working with the women: two health providers, one secretary as well as a costume lady working at the club.

Drop Outs

One interview could not be used since the woman stated that she normally did not have tourist customers.

Ethical Considerations

All respondents were informed of the topics my research covered and the women were also promised confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. I have therefore changed the names of the women. I asked permission to use a tape recorder to record the interviews and I took notes during two interviews when the women openly disagreed or seemed suspicious (Neuman 1999:98,376).

Limitations of This Study

Coming to Jamaica as a white university student from Western Europe, performing research about tourism-oriented prostitution and interviewing women of colour in unfamiliar sites is in itself problematic. Kempadoo claims that having an outsider position without having a long-standing relationship with Caribbean culture, society and sex trade can be a severe research limitation (2001:45). My personal experience though is quite different. The majority of the women were very interested and curious and hence asked me a lot of questions about Sweden and myself. I sometimes even thought it was an advantage to come from another

¹ See *Limitations of This Study* further down this page for a fuller discussion.

setting because that created a basis for a mutual exchange. My prior hesitations and fears of difficult language barriers, lacking cultural understanding and agony of re-victimising the women, were exaggerated. All of the women for example spoke English although I believe it would have been easier to perform the interviews if I fully understood Patois (a form of Creole English). The problems I met along the way were more related to the situation of the women than me as a white foreigner. For example I had to keep the interviews fairly short and focused as the majority of the women had a limited attention span. One obstacle I experienced when interviewing the women offering their sexual services to the cruising passengers and staff members was that they were more interested in trying to sell me their sexual services than talking to me about their experiences. They were also quite tough and it was more difficult to get information from them compared to the exotic dancers.

In some cases I found the answers and the information given by the women somewhat mechanical. Some of the women at the club tended to repeat certain information i.e. that the club, the money and the boss himself was very nice. Convincing oneself that something is better than it is by rationalising to protect oneself is a common defence mechanism and Pervin & John argue that in order to avoid anxiety “behaviour is reinterpreted so that it appears to be reasonable and acceptable” (1996:91). Bearing in mind that the women did not know me very well when taking part in the interviews, that took place at the club where they were living and working, and that they could not with certainty know how I would use the information given, I do not find this surprising. The women are in a vulnerable position and could be somewhat biased while sharing information about their current life situation. Although my questions did not directly cover sensitive topics such as working conditions and treatment from the management I think that the women might have been afraid that their stories would leak out and put them in a bad, perhaps unemployed, situation.

The majority of the women I interviewed were working at the same club, which within the local context is regarded as an upscale club with a good reputation. The management i.e. required the women to test regularly for HIV and hence there were no HIV positive women in the club. Since Jamaica is an extremely homophobic society and street prostitutes seem to be the most stigmatised in the industry, I believe my results would have come out differently, regarding experience of stigma as well as self perception, if I had conducted my study with

women selling sex on the downtown streets or men selling sex to men. These groups though are not primarily solicited by tourists and were therefore not taken into consideration for being a part of my sample. They are also more difficult to get in contact with, more time-consuming and, since I was working alone, the aspect of personal safety is not to be neglected.

I think that the two professional health providers I interviewed were able to share their experiences and observations from working closely with sex workers though there are also risks involved when using secondary data. The professionals' contribution might have been influenced by their own personal morals, judgements and beliefs as well by their 'professional mission'.

A final limitation is that the part of the analysis that regards perception of tourists lacks obvious theoretical foundation. I have chosen to focus on the case in Jamaica and I have unfortunately not been able to find much relevant literature about this particular question.

Validity of Results

Validity, generalisation and reliability are three main concepts within modern social sciences and I will briefly go through them all (Kvale 1997:209). In my interviews I mostly used open-ended questions, except of one question to the women (Appendix question 5). Because of the leading nature of this question, the reliability of the results might have been lowered (Kvale 1997:145). To increase the validity of my results, I triangulated the method and looked at my objectives from several perspectives by using the mentioned methods earlier as well as several groups of respondents (Neuman 1999:124). I have been working alone and when being close to the data collected, I believe that I got a satisfactory understanding of the data's strengths and limitations (Devereux & Hoddinott 1992:25).

The aspect of not knowing with certainty if the women I interviewed were involved in regular tourism-oriented prostitution, where there is a clear exchange of money for sex from tourists, or a more subtle form of prostitution might have affected the validity of my results. The women offering their sexual services to the cruising passengers and staff members would belong to the first group as well as the majority of the exotic dancers. When it comes

to the latter group though I do not know with certainty who was doing business although I got the impression that the majority of the women were involved directly.

Neuman (1999:33) states that when conducting a case study generalisations are often difficult to make but Reinharz (1992:264) argues that when the case:

studied is typical of cases of a certain kind /.../ generalisations may be made which will be applicable to other cases of the same type

Tourism-oriented prostitution is a well-known trend although the specific experiences and perceptions my respondents often shared, might stem from a Jamaican context and therefore differ somewhat from other places.

Disposition

The following part of the report is structured into two main chapters starting with a theoretical framework in which I will introduce Jamaica, discuss concepts used in the paper as well as presenting the case of tourism-oriented prostitution from two perspectives. I will also review relevant literature and theories that I will use as a theoretical base when analysing my data. After the theoretical chapter my own field study will be presented and I start by presenting the two sites, where I have conducted my work, as well as the interviewees. After that I will give an account for my own results by coding collected data into themes and incorporating my analysis in the data presentation. A brief conclusion will sum up the results of my field study. In the last part of the paper, the final discussion, I will go further and look into new angles of the case.

Theoretical Framework

Introducing Developing Jamaica as a Tourist Destination

The violent history of Jamaica is characterised by Spanish and British colonial rule and forced importation of Africans as slaves starting in the 15th century (Kempadoo 2004:5). The country gained independence from Britain on August 6 1962, but continued to be a part of the Commonwealth with Queen Elisabeth as head of state (World Almanac Education Group Inc. 2001:39). English is the official language but Patois is the dialect most widely spoken. Jamaica has approximately 2.65 million inhabitants and 30 per cent live in the capital Kingston. There are many ethnic groups and religions represented on the island and the majority of the people (90%) have African descent but there are smaller populations of white people, Indians and Chinese. Protestantism is the religion most frequently practised (Background notes on countries of the world 2001).

Jamaica is a poor developing country, heavily indebted to international financial institutions, such as International Monetary Fond and The World Bank. Since the 1980's the country has been subject to structural adjustment programs enforced by above named financial institutions, which have heightened poverty and unemployment. One third of Jamaicans are living below poverty line and approximately 16 per cent are unemployed (A human rights report 2002:276; Sánchez Taylor 2001:757; Kempadoo 1999:19; Kempadoo 2004:117). Among the unemployed, women continue to dominate and they account for 64 per cent of this group (Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed 1999:126). Economic stagnation, urban migration and political chaos have formed a rough climate with extended social problems such as rising criminality and violence², especially in the urban regions (Arscott-Mills 2001; Background notes on countries of the world 2001; www.sida.se).

The tourism industry represents a huge part of the economy³ though the profit is global and not confined to the local level. The Jamaican government has supported various private-sector arrangements, such as all-inclusive projects and eco-tourism, which have generated greater foreign earnings and the growing alienation of local communities (Kempadoo

² 40 people were killed the first ten days in January 2005 according to local Jamaican TV news, CVM News Watch, 01/11/05.

³ According to CVM News Watch 10/12/04 the tourism industry is US \$705 million for 2004.

1999:21; Mullings 2000:234). All-inclusive tourist packages are popular but when everything is paid in advance in the tourist's home country, little expenditure is made in the host country (Kempadoo 2004:116). Around 70 per cent of foreign exchange that is eventually earned on tourism in the Caribbean is used to pay for the imported goods that the tourists require during their holiday (Kempadoo 1999:21).

Discussion & Definitions of Concepts

Tourism-Oriented Prostitution

Prostitution, sex work and female sexual slavery are some of the concepts used to describe the exchange of money for sex (Barry 1979; Kempadoo 2001:46-48). There are many theories and ways of perceiving the prostitute and the phenomenon. Some people would say that prostitution is immoral, a social problem, sexual oppression, economic oppression or economic opportunity (Pettman 1999:9; Phillip & Dann 1998:64). From a Marxist perspective prostitution is regarded as the objectification and commodification of women's bodies (Herold, Garcia & DeMoya 2001:979). I do not intend to give an account for the different perspectives in this report since it would be too time-consuming.

Kempadoo stresses the importance of allowing the women who are involved in prostitution to speak for themselves. She states that most Caribbean women decide to enter prostitution as a consequence of either domestic or economic problems and the women themselves define their activities strictly as work; one way to feed, house, clothe and educate their families. Based upon these findings Kempadoo uses 'sex work' and 'sex worker' instead of prostitution and prostitute simply because she argues that the latter indicates essentialism, whereas sex work is something these people do for a living as an income-generating activity. It is important to listen to the women involved, share their stories and acknowledge the sexual labour but at the same time I have chosen not to use the term sex work simply because I think it romanticises and normalises the phenomenon. The majority of these women is socially and economically deprived and has no sufficient alternatives (Kempadoo 1999:17; Kempadoo 2004:53,72). They come from working class backgrounds and have often experienced [sexual] abuse⁴ (Gayle 2004:210). Keeping this in mind, and still talking

⁴ Some of my own data support this notion. The secretary at the club stated that when asking the women why they want to work at the club "some say they were abused from they were small and had to run away [from

about “choosing sex work”, is to neglect the importance of gender, race/ethnicity and social structures, transforming structural inequalities and problems into an individual or personal level. I believe it is too simplistic; these women are not isolated objects, distanced and unbiased from the world.

This discussion is somewhat complex and without taking an essentialist and downgrading standpoint, I will use the concept of tourism-oriented prostitution in this report (Phillis 1999:183). If nothing else is stated, I refer to the women as women, prostitutes or even sex workers. Sex tourism is most often used to describe the phenomenon but I state that tourism-oriented prostitution is more accurate and actually explains the trend. Sex tourism neglects power dimensions and the core of the phenomenon; people [mostly white men] from the north travelling to developing countries in the south, exchanging their money for sex. To use the concept of sex tourism is to me comparable to the popular way of calling men’s violence towards women ‘domestic violence’. Based on Enloe’s (1989:36) definition of the phenomenon which states “travel specifically to purchase the sexual services of local women” I have in this report chosen to define tourism-oriented prostitution as “foreign male tourists who travel to third world countries to purchase the sexual services of local women⁵”.

To Do Business

In Jamaica there are many sites where prostitution is a common feature even if the activity is illegal by law (A human rights report 2002:277). All across the island there are numerous massage parlours where the masseuses are doing exotic massages in the nude and night clubs offering exotic dancing and freaky shows where the women i.e. have live sex on stage⁶. Even if the exchange sex for money is not openly discussed there are women doing business, meaning offering sexual services, at these sites. Most exotic dancers get their main income from doing business and even if there are some who ‘only dance’ the vast majority of the women offer sexual services. If there is a woman who states that she is not doing any business it is usually just a matter of time before she starts (conversation with Dr. Ian Boxill 10/11/04). A

home]” (interview 102204). Patricia Russle said that many women have been sexually abused and enter prostitution as a way of getting back at men (interview 101904).

⁵ This definition is suitable for this report’s focus although I argue that every paid sexual encounter between a visiting foreigner and a local, regardless of sex, should be seen as tourism-oriented prostitution.

⁶ This information is achieved through observations and interviews.

statement from one of the exotic dancers supports Dr. Boxill, who claim that most exotic dancers sooner or later start doing business:

Put it in this way... you are a stripper... somebody come by and want to have some fun and offer something which is reasonable and you don't have a problem doing it so you go and do it, you understand?

Alice 24

The Case of Tourism-Oriented Prostitution

Sexual slavery (better known as trafficking), prostitution and pornography exist in societies all over the world. The sex industry is global and involves several actors and dimensions of power structures and generates enormous amounts of money; as a whole at least \$20 billion a year (Mullings 2000:234). Tourism-oriented prostitution is becoming a common phenomenon in many tourist areas in developing countries and there are many reasons and theories explaining why an expansion of tourism is likely to increase the prevalence of prostitution and other sexual services set up for tourists.

It has been observed that the tourism industry has a long maintained relationship with sex and sexual imagery is often used in promotional materials (Oppermann & McKinley 1998:23; Ryan 2000:23). Stuart Hall has analysed in Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn (2002:38,39) how racist stereotypes and exoticism have been manifested in the symbolic world of western mass media since WW2. The Other has been constructed as more authentically sensitive, more aggressive, passionate, expressively sexual and sexually tempting human being which becomes a contrast to the western, alienated person with minimised love life and set of emotions (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn 2002:38,39; Pruitt & LaFont 1995:430). The western tourist is hence looking for pleasure and experience of Otherness in a natural and exotic holiday. The Caribbean especially has long been portrayed as an exotic resource-filled region and a hypersexual image has been constructed (Kempadoo 2004:1). Tourism-oriented prostitution is increasingly widespread in Jamaica and every year

thousands of people go to the Caribbean in order to buy sex⁷ (A human rights report 2002:276). Mullings (1999:65) claims that:

The industry as a whole routinely utilises hedonistic imagery of “sun, sand and sex” that relies heavily on racialised constructions of women as “exotic” and “wild” to market the island [of Jamaica] as a tourist destination.

Enloe analyses the importance of power surrounding the phenomenon. She states that tourism is not only about escaping work, rest and recreation but also about internationalised power (1989:40). According to studies within the field this power means prostitute-using tourists having more money, whiter colour and, to a wider extent, belonging to a higher social class than the women they solicit (Kempadoo 2001:49; Pruitt & LaFont 1995:422). Kempadoo states that this rapid development of contemporary tourism-oriented prostitution is created by international racialised and gendered divisions of power and labour, occurring through globalisation (2001:42).

Post-Colonial & Feminist Perspectives

The well-known sociologist Franz Fanon once wrote about the Caribbean stating:

The national bourgeoisie organises centres of rest and relaxation and pleasure resorts to meet the wish of the western bourgeoisie. Such activities is given the name tourism /---/ The national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of the manager of western enterprise, and the practice set up its country as the brothel of Europe (Kempadoo 1999:3).

As well as Fanon, Kempadoo argues that the Caribbean has become a service centre for wealthier peoples and nations, which has positioned the Caribbean people as sex workers. Doing this they are reinforcing long-standing patterns of dominance and subordination between the North and the South as well as global gendered inequalities (Kempadoo 2001:40). Under slavery and European colonial dominance, black women have been the objects of sexual and economic exploitation. As black women and slaves, they had little protection against slaveholders and sexual violence and black women’s sexual and manual

⁷ Patricia Russle, Market Health Authority, state that “more [tourists] than one would want to admit come for sex. We sell it in such a way that the message is so sublime that when you come here you automatically look for the sex but Jamaica is more than just sex...” (Interview 11/18/04).

labour was in fact 'pimped' by the slaveholders. The abuse black women experienced, was ideologically legitimated by depicting them as animals, close to nature and promiscuous. The sexual violence was an important part of the systemised racism (Essed 1996:46,47; *ibid.*).

By writing the book *Orientalism*, Edward Said created a concept where Orientalism was supporting the colonial powers economic and political dominance in the world. Orientalism constructed East and West as binary oppositions where East was given attribute such as sensuality, irrationality, anti progress, despotism and femininity, whereas West was viewed in terms of rationality, progressives, democracy and masculinity (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn 2002:20-23). Spivak is one scholar who combines post-colonial theory with a feminist perspective and who claims that there is an intimate relation between gender and racism; East and Women were hence given the same, less valued attributes⁸ (*ibid.*). According to Said orientalism helped to strengthen West's self-image as a superior civilisation and together with the construction of biologist and anthropologist 'race' categories in the 19th century, Essed (1996:7) claims that these ideas justified colonialism and hence the slavery of Africans. The simplistic ideas about the European super 'race' and those of lesser qualities; 'others', have changed over time and biological inferiority is being replaced by a concern with culture and ethnicity (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn 2002:20,21).

According to post-colonial theory, colonialism is still very much forming the world, not only in economical terms but also in cultural. Colonialism is not simply a relic of the past and the prefix 'post' should be seen as a critique of the common view that regards and analyses contemporary cultural processes as something outside and beyond colonialism (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn 2002:14,16). Thus, the structure behind tourism-oriented prostitution in Jamaica is not new. Various kinds of sexual-economic transactions, where there is an exchange of sex for money or material benefits, have a long history and are deeply embedded in the Caribbean societies. Kempadoo claims that "black and brown bodies become (or continue to be) the sites for construction of (white) North American and Western European power, wealth and well being" (2004:53). Caribbean people are hence subjects of eroticism, sexual fantasies and exploitation from tourists that use the Caribbean as a place to consolidate or redefine their own cultural identities (Kempadoo 2001:58).

Pettman states that a significant number of prostitutes in the world come from racialised, minority or 'foreign' backgrounds and poor women of colour with little education as well as children are also particularly vulnerable actors in the globalisation of the sex trade. Many women enter the business as a survival strategy for themselves and their dependants, when well-paid alternative occupations are lacking and their own body is the only social security asset (Gayle 2004:221; Kempadoo 1998; Pettman 1999:110; Ryan 2000:34). Furthermore Enloe argues that a successful sex tourism equation requires economically deprived third world women who are desperate enough to enter prostitution. Having done so, it is difficult to leave. Generally on the other side of the equation there are western men who imagine some women, usually women of colour⁹, to be more available and submissive than the women in their home countries (Enloe 1989:36; Oppermann 1998:1).

Oppermann states that there are many forms of currently existing tourism-oriented prostitution that are of similar importance (1998:1). Tourism-oriented prostitution in Jamaica for example is not exclusively a female activity and romance tourism/'rent-a-dread'-phenomenon¹⁰ is widely known (Kempadoo 2001:48,775; Pruitt & LaFont 1995:425). Pruitt and LaFont came up with the term *Romance tourism* to describe the relations between local Jamaican men and foreign women. They named the phenomenon Romance tourism since they found out that tourist women were likely to describe these encounters as holiday romance and the men would not define themselves as prostitutes (Kempadoo 2001:48, Pruitt & LaFont 1995:433; Sánchez-Taylor 2001:754). Pruitt's & LaFont's analysis behind the concept of Romance tourism has many interesting points although I believe that there is a risk that the term reproduces the common, often essentialist, perception that women want romance rather than sex. Albuquerque in Herold, Garcia & DeMoya (2001:980) strongly disagrees with this concept when his finding has showed that women want casual sex rather than romance. I argue that this form of prostitution is not of "similar importance" since there are several important differences in experiences, prevalence and definitions of prostitution by female and male prostitutes and of male and female tourists. This paper focuses on the situation of women in this particular kind of sex

⁸ For further reading see Diana Mulinari *Motherwork and politics in Revolutionary Nicaragua* from 1995.

⁹ Mullings argues that also sex workers "engage in the objectification and aestheticisation of the Other, but unlike sex tourists, they do not have the power to commodify" (2000:239).

industry since they generally are more vulnerable and stigmatised than men are (Herold, Garcia & DeMoya 2001:993; Kempadoo 2001:39-40,49; Sánchez Taylor 2001:761). Male tourists are for example far more likely to enter into explicit and narrow ‘money for sex with locals’-arrangements than female tourists. Foreign men also enjoy gendered, economic and racialised powers over local females, who are often, reported being abused by their tourist clients. Many local women therefore pay men for protection from potential violence from clients (Kempadoo 2001:52,53; Kempadoo 2004:68). Female prostitutes are further also vulnerable to violence, such as rape and physical abuse, police harassment and legal prosecution, since prostitution is illegal in Jamaica. A situation male prostitutes never find themselves in. The phenomenon of male prostitution is not very prevalent and the tourist resort is also the only site where heterosexual male prostitution has been observed. There are no men doing business at exotic nightclubs and there is no street prostitution of local men for foreign women. Another important notion to be aware of is that tourist women’s privilege is mostly based on their economic, political and social status and their status and privilege can be jeopardised when becoming more permanently involved with black men. White men’s whiteness is never threatened by their sexual contact with black women (A human rights report 2002:277; Kempadoo 2004:71; Sánchez Taylor 2001:760,775).

Literature Review of Prior Research

Stigmatisation

If a woman engages in explicitly sexual relationships without being attached to procreation and economical needs of the family she will be scorned, marginalised and disrespected as a loose woman within the local culture logic. If she gets involved in sexual-economic transactions in the tourist industry she is generally viewed as a whore (Kempadoo 2004:79).

Discourses of sexuality and femininity frequently distinguish between good and bad women although time, class and place make a difference (Pettman 1999:9). The sexual objectification of women has hence created a madonna/whore dichotomy where even women, who are not offering sexual services for money, can be labelled and hence stigmatised as whores (Essed 1996:47). Many scholars have come to the conclusion that women who offer sexual services

¹⁰ Rent-a-dreads are young, local black men who are said to lock their hair to Rastafarian dreadlocks in order to attract female western tourists.

for money are stigmatised. Goffman defines stigma as “the situation that hit the individual who for some reason is not socially recognised”. In his book *Stigma*, Goffman discusses this concept and argues that there are three reasons for stigmatisation¹¹. The way I interpret Goffman, women who are involved in prostitution are stigmatised on the basis of their lacking personal character. Since these women have a stigma attached, people do not see them as complete human beings and discriminatory actions are taken to reduce their life space and possibilities. To explain their inferiority people form a stigma theory, with a certain stigma terminology, that will convince themselves and others that these women are a danger to society (1972:14,15).

A study from Guyana, conducted by The Red Thread Women Development Program, shows that most female prostitutes share experiences of regular verbal abuse and “women are in danger of being labelled as slack or loose” (1999:272,274). Some of the Jamaican women in Campbell’s, Perkins’ & Mohammed’s (1999:148) study, reported being fed up doing business because it is a hard and also a stigmatised way to earn money and one woman, who is quoted in the title of this paper, said that “you is whore you no worth nothing”. Herold, Garcia & DeMoya state that stigmatisation by the local population for Caribbean women is far more explicit than for men who offer their sexual services for money because of a system of sexual double standard (2001:982; Kempadoo 1999:15). “Beyond casual relationships a woman is seen as a whore, prostitute, jammette, mattress or loose” and these women are perceived as immoral while those [men] who seek the sexual services are deemed pleasure seekers and not necessarily tainted as immoral human beings (Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed 1999:152; Kempadoo 2004:9). Oppermann (1998:5) argues, along with Kempadoo, that:

It is and has always been the prostitutes who had and still have to bear the brunt of society’s moral attitudes and the ensuing social and legal pressures. Kempadoo theorises why she thinks Caribbean prostitutes are stigmatised and marginalised. She states that there are two sets of power in operation in Caribbean societies: heterosexism and patriarchy. This constitution of heteropatriarchy marginalises and criminalises gendered subjects who transgress established sexual boundaries. Heteropatriarchy is thus a concept that privileges heterosexual, promiscuous masculinity and subordinates feminine sexuality. Heteropatriarchy normalises relations of power that are intolerant of and oppressive towards other sexual desires and practices. In this structure, together with the discourse of hyper

¹¹ I use stigmatisation as “the act of stigmatising; accusing or condemning openly or formally as disgraceful”. Stigmatisation here includes marginalisation as in “the social process of becoming or being made marginal (especially as a group within the larger society) i.e. the marginalisation of sex workers (www.wordreference.com/definition 10/15/04).

sexuality, homosexuals, transgender and prostitutes, are not only seen as oversexed Caribbean subjects but as outlaws and non-citizens (2004:21). Though Kempadoo argues that women who are involved in (tourism-oriented) prostitution, in most cases are stigmatised she also states that their occupation might be accepted because they support their families. Kempadoo (2004:79) states that:

Women are marginalised on the basis of their sexuality, but racially are seen to be performing their expected role and may be tolerated because they are seen as making do within the tradition of working-class women to support their family.

Hierarchies

There seems to be a sub-hierarchy within the sex industry based on level of education, type of arrangement, work location and, for a limited degree, ethnicity or nationality (Kempadoo 2001:51). The women on the street are observed to be at the bottom and the ones in the upscale clubs and tourist resorts are at the top, having higher status and income as well getting less stigma (Ryan 2000:30; Kempadoo 2001:51,56). Though women of all ethnicities and culture are active in prostitution there is an evident trend with racialised hierarchies structured into the sex trade through out the Caribbean. These structures reflect long-standing racist hierarchies and reassert the privilege of being white and the 'undesirability' of blackness (Kempadoo 2000:81). Women working on the street tend to get local deprived customers whereas club prostitutes get rich international customers. 'Local' women of Afro-Caribbean decent are hence often seen in street prostitution and other ill-paid sectors (Carter 2000:138; Kempadoo 1998:130-131). Further it is noted that women on the street are less educated and that there is little mobility within the different areas of prostitution. Street workers i.e. never move into working with tourists and for the most part, women working in tourist resorts do not work elsewhere because of the money and conditions being better there than in other places (Cabezas 1999:97; Kempadoo 2001:58).

Apart from supporting each other Brennan has noticed that many sex workers position themselves as different and superior to their co-workers and in that way reproduce the hierarchies. Many women gossip about other sex workers and insist that they themselves are not like the others (on the street etc.). Their gossip about 'other' sex workers reflects the criticism and rumours that Sosúan residents circulate about them, i.e. that sex workers are dangerous transmitters of HIV/AIDS (2004:715,716).

Self-Perception In Terms of Occupation

Female sex workers normally have little problem in identifying themselves as such although some women adamantly do not identify as prostitutes (Brennan 2004:715; Kempadoo 2004: 77). Most women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution define their occupation as a way to make a living, a job¹² that generates money to support their families (Kempadoo 2004:60). Sex workers therefore often “depict themselves as selfless, responsible and caring mothers” (Brennan 2004:715). For many young women tourism-oriented prostitution offers much higher income than most blue-collar manufacturing and other service jobs¹³ and research has shown that most women are in it for the money, not for the sex (Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed 1999:148; Kempadoo 2004:60; Mullings 1999:70). Brennan has written about sex work in Sosúa and her findings show that many women’s perceive themselves and the industry ambivalently. One woman says:

On one side tourism is good, on the other not. Tourists don’t care what we are /.../ Tourists come here for vacation with putas. This makes me ashamed. But I make money in this work for my children that I can’t make in other jobs” (Brennan 2004:717).

¹² See *Disussion and Definitions of Concepts* page 14 for a wider discussion.

¹³ Brennan states ”while a sex worker can earn 500 pesos a client, these other tourist-related jobs yield around 1000—1500 pesos a month” (2004:710).

The Field Study

Presentation of Sites & Interviewees

Ocho Rios is Jamaica's third tourist resort after Montego Bay and Negril. Ocho Rios is the only place in Jamaica, which consistently offers a destination for cruise ships and a particular form of prostitution have been noticed here (Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed 1999:130). Several times a week one or perhaps two or three cruise ships dock at the pier and crew members as well as tourists coming off the ship are using sexual services by prostitutes during the day light hours. There is a bar conveniently located near the pier where passengers and staff members pass by on their way through town. The women get their clients by signalling and calling them when walking by: "hey you/babe/shorty, wanna' party?" or perhaps "hey, I've got something for you". The women also have taxi drivers in town who are 'helping' them to get business by bringing clients to the bar where there are rooms to be rented. I have talked to four women who are doing business at the bar and I refer to them as 'the pier women'. I have named them Tamieka, Doris, Karen and Anna. They are black Jamaicans; between 19 and 27 years of age and they all have children to support.

The Sun is one of several nightclubs in Ocho Rios where a lot of tourists go to be entertained by young female Jamaican exotic dancers and/or buy sex. Apart from the exotic dancing, the club offers a freaky show once a week. The Sun is officially a nightclub and prostitution is not openly talked about though the club has got rooms to be rented by the hour. If a man wishes to leave at night on an out-call with one of the women he is required to pay money to the management. The women are advised to perform safe sex and every three months they are requested to do an HIV-test by the management. About thirty women work at the club and some of them live at the premises. I have interviewed Sharon, Alice, Cathy, Sofia, Fatima, Natasha, Lorna and Kerry who are working and living at the Sun. I refer to them as 'the exotic dancers'. The majority of the eight women have been working at the Sun as well as other strip clubs or massage parlours in Jamaica for several years. None of them are born in Ocho Rios and the women who share information about where they were brought up, say they come from poor neighbourhoods. The women are all black Jamaicans, they are also ranging from 19 to 27 years of age and a number of them have children they support.

I have also interviewed four professionals (two health providers and two staff members at the Sun). Patricia Russle is working with the market health authority as the Regional Behaviour Change Communication Officer. Patricia and her colleagues aim to promote and sustain particular sexual behaviours and they target communities and individuals and give them a tailored health message. Sex workers are one of the primary target groups and Patricia and her colleagues work in conjunction with JAS. Lenford Harvey is working for JAS in Kingston as a Targeted Intervention Co-ordinator and he works closely in the field with sex workers. I have also interviewed the costume lady, who is responsible for the dancers' outfits, as well as the secretary at the club. These two women interact with the exotic dancers every day.

Analysis of Data Collected

I have proceeded with my analysis by extracting themes and patterns from my material. The themes are named *Nicer Than “Dem Local Clubs”, ‘Watch Dat Go-Go Gal’, Better “Dan locals” and “Dancing For My Money”*. The themes give an account of the existing hierarchies within the industry, the verbal abuse they experience, and the women’s perception of tourists as well as the women’s perception of themselves in terms of their occupation. I have organised the data this way trying to present a coherent, consistent picture (Neuman 1999:123)

Nicer Than “Dem Local Clubs”

Most exotic dancers are pointing out that working at the Sun, or other upscale clubs, for many reasons is better than working on the street or at a local go-go club. This finding supports prior research that women on the street and dancing at local go-go clubs are more stigmatised than the ones in upscale clubs (Carter 2000:138; Kempadoo 1998:130,131; Kempadoo 2001:51,56; Ryan 2000:30). The exotic dancers’ experience of locals often reflects this notion and Cathy thinks that most people would say she is “one of dem nice girls” because she works at the Sun.

If we are walking on the street and two guys saw us, one of the guys would say ‘I am going to talk to that girl’ the other one would say, if they know that we were working at the Sun ‘yeah you can talk to them, they work at the Sun, they do not work at dem local club, they work at the Sun’...

Cathy 27

The reason why the Sun is perceived as a well-respected club is, according to Cathy, because she and the other women do not have to dance completely nude at the Sun. At many local clubs “from the beginning to the end is nude”. Sharon shares a similar opinion and says that there are different kinds of clubs in Jamaica. Only a few of them have a good reputation and working there means getting less bad treatment.

When you dance at certain dance clubs /.../ they look at you low, but when you dance at like the Sun, Palace Royal, Caesars [upscale exotic night clubs] they don’t really look at you any way, you understand? /.../ you are more on a higher level /.../ The girls who are working at the other clubs and stuff are go-go, whore and stuff but when they come to this club they see we are nice exotic dancers.

Sharon 25

The costume lady says that it is hard to make a living in Jamaica. She does not see anything wrong with working at the Sun and she compares the job the women are doing with bikini cat-walking on TV and female tourists exposing themselves on the beach. She ignores the fact that the majority of the women offer sexual services besides dancing. Working at the

Sun is, according to the costume lady, “better than doing it on street” and she perceives it as a job like any else: “[at the Sun] you get your work and you get your pay, a place to stay“. Cathy also thinks that working at the Sun is better than “selling you body on the street” because working at the Sun means having a place to stay. Cathy has many good things to say about the Sun and she repeats that women on the street are more discriminated than herself and her co-dancers. She thoroughly stresses that they are in a nice place where “they have everything for you”: kitchen, a place to stay and money. Working in a club seems to fulfil basic needs and secure important security dimensions. Cathy also compares stigma between housed women and street prostitutes. She says that the women at the club do not have to look for customers since the people come to see them.

People see them [street prostitutes] on the street and they... ‘boy, they are nothing’ so they definitely have to go and look for people.

Cathy 27

While being out on the streets handing out condoms to the women, Lenford Harvey has himself heard and noticed the stigmatisation they often put up with. Some people passing by would suppose he was soliciting and therefore call the women names and shout “prostitute and whore... things like those”. Lenford’s statement goes in line with Oppermann (1998:5) and Kempadoo who argue that it is the prostitutes and not the men who buy sexual services who are regarded as immoral. Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed state that “the issue of immorality with regard to sex work is skewed” (1999:152). Lenford admits having, before he got involved with JAS, the same understandings as many other people. He says he used to “look at sex workers as somebody that was degrading”. Lenford has also observed existing hierarchies and says that the women on the street are perceived as whores and more stigmatised than the exotic dancers.

It’s interesting... on the street corners they often get the bitter end of the stigma than those in the clubs. Because the girls in the clubs... [Men] go to the club /.../ to see them, but the ones on the street they are people who just driving by and they see them sitting or standing or whatever and they are stigmatised then.

Lenford Harvey

Alice finally wants me to tell people that exotic dancers are good people. At the same time she is comparing the Sun, which she says is an “exotic night club”, with other clubs, putting herself as an “exotic dancer” in a better position. She says that there are many “not environmental friendly” go-go clubs in Jamaica where there are dancers who are “some nasty types”. By stating this she is herself reproducing stigmatisation of women working in local clubs. I have observed several women doing this and the trend gets support from Brennan who has noticed the same thing (2004:715,716). Another interesting contradiction is that most women, perhaps by mistake, during the interview refer to themselves as go-go dancers or strippers though they at the same time

openly downgrade local go-go clubs and the women working in them. Sofia for example says that she “just recently become a go-go dancer”.

‘Watch Dat Go-Go Gal’

Along with contemporary research all the women share experience of having people stigmatising them in various ways, often by verbal abuse and name-calling (The Red Thread Women Development Program 1999:272). Many of the exotic dancers, one of the pier women as well as the secretary at the club mention the importance of avoiding downgrading comments by not dressing as an exotic dancer [prostitute]. The secretary says that most women normally “clothe themselves properly when going down town” though they still sometimes get comments like ‘you’re a go-go’ from locals. According to the secretary the women dislike the term “go-go” and the management therefore always refer to them as exotic dancers.

Patricia Russle states that it is easy for people to stigmatise the women since they tend to stand out from the crowd by the way they look and dress. She says there are a lot of subtle ways to stigmatise; perhaps some people choose not to sit next to a woman in the taxi or live at the same street as her. Natasha shares the same opinion as Patricia Russle and says that many exotic dancers dress in short skirts and talk as well as operate in a particular way, which make people understand that they perform exotic dancing. When I first meet with Natasha she looks suspicious and speaks quietly but after a while she gets more secure and shares that she also gets “disrespect” such as verbal abuse from local people. The majority of the women state that most locals do not know their occupation and therefore they do not get a lot of bad treatment. Cathy is one of them and she says that she has not experienced a lot of stigmatisation because she does not dress as an exotic dancer though she says that some people do not like her and discriminate her by calling her “go-go gal”.

Some dancers dress in batty riders and x-rated clothes on the streets. Every body knows that they... ‘That’s a go-go’... She is not really worthwhile. I don’t dress that way. I don’t wear those on the streets as you can see. I dress like a lady... always dress like a lady. You have to see me at the club to know ‘she is a dancer’ as less you know me as a dancer...

Cathy 27

Sofia comes about as a very literate and focused woman. She willingly shares experience from her life and tells me about the other day when she was walking down town dressed in a hipster skirt. She thought it was inappropriate to show her panties and therefore pulled them down a bit when suddenly a group of people started calling at her. They screamed ‘The Sun’s production’ and ‘go and put on panties’ after her. Sofia states she did not pay them any attention but she looks somewhat sad while telling me about the incident. Further she says that many people take advantage of her and the other women because they are exotic dancers. In line with Kempadoo (2004:79), who argues that women who are involved in sexual-economic transaction in the tourist industry generally are viewed as whores, Sofia says:

The fact that we are dancers... most likely people normally take advantage of us or say that we are whores and bitches... but they don’t understand why we’re dancing.

Sofia 19

Sharon is talking quietly and seems to be in a mellow mood when I meet her. She says that when people know her as an exotic dancer she sometimes has them calling her 'go-go' but she says she does not have a lot of experience from bad treatment. Though she also points out that she has not been in the business for long and she does not know about the future.

Fatima, Kerry, Anna, Doris, Karen and Tamioka have come across similar responses to the other women. Fatima says some people would say 'watch the go-go gal'. Kerry also has experienced people calling her 'go-go gal' as well as 'pussy'. Anna, Doris, Karen and Tamioka state that they sometimes are called 'whore girl' or 'bitch' but Doris says that happens only if you dress like a prostitute. Tamioka shares that people passing by the bar sometimes "fuck around" [mess around] with herself and the other women and they pass remarks like 'how much you sell pussy for?'.

Sharon received a lot of bad treatment when she was doing freaky shows at the Sun and she therefore decided to stop taking part in them. She says that people for example scorned and did not want to talk to her. The money was good but Sharon says she could not cope with people looking down on her. Even though Sharon is "just dancing" now she still feels like she is looked at differently.

Even now, because people know I used to do the show, some of the dancers didn't want to eat with us [the women taking part in the freaky show]...

Sharon 25

Women who are involved in prostitution are, according to Patricia Russle, seen as loose and looked down upon by Jamaicans. She says that many exotic dancers, because of the stigma, literally mask themselves when they go on stage so people cannot recognise them. She also says that many women move away from their hometown when they enter the business. This in order to get away from stigmatisation and to avoid letting family members know about their activities. Patricia Russle's statement supports my own findings where only a few of the women I interviewed come from Ocho Rios and the majority of them do not want their loved ones to find out. It is hence not only locals and other exotic dancers who take part in the stigmatisation; some women state that their family and friends do not support what they are doing for a living. Sofia is afraid that she will not have a family anymore if they find out how she is getting her money. She says she moved to Ocho Rios because it is far from home and "it's not a big possibility that somebody I [she] know would come here". Sharon shares experiences from her family's perception:

Ever since I start dancing, my mother, my sister, my grandmother are like... Most of my family are like 'why are you dancing?'. My little sister says she is ashamed of me because I dance /.../

every time I'm home she says 'shame on you Sharon, shame on you' /.../ She is ashamed to walk with me because I dance... all of that stuff.

Sharon 25

Anna, Doris, Karen and Tamioka are very friendly but sometimes somewhat hard to interview while they constantly joke around with me and offer me their sexual services. They tell me that I look "sexy" and have a "fat pum pum" and they talk a lot about having sex with women. They state that people sometimes shout "suck pussy" or "lesbians" in a downgrading way at them and while meeting with them I observe a couple of men coming by calling them lesbians and asking me if I "like girls". One man also shouted "white pussy" to me from a lorry passing by. I find this particular kind of stigmatisation very interesting while it seems to me that the pier women then are stigmatised, not only and all the time because they sell sexual services, but because they state they are having sex with women, although Anna said that they only got female customers "one in a blue" [very seldom].

When it comes to experiences of stigma and discrimination from the public as well as personal feelings around these issues, many of the women are ambivalent and give contradictory statements. Though Fatima shares some experience of name-calling she still claims that most people in the community would think that she is "working for her money". Only sometimes, if people had seen her at the club, people would discriminate, she says. The same thing with Cathy who first says that people on the street do not discriminate because they see her occupation as a job and then she says that some people do not like her and therefore would discriminate her by maybe saying that she is a 'go-go' or 'slut'. Lorna expresses that some people degrade her occupation and some think of it as an "honest living". Her mother for example does not like it but at the same time the money support her child and the rest of the family. Fatima's, Lorna's and Cathy's thoughts, about people perceiving their occupation as a job, get support from Kempadoo who states that the women may 'be tolerated because they are seen as making do within the tradition of working-class women to support their family' (2004:79).

Some of the women say that they are indifferent to people's comments and Fatima says she does not care because she is the one "having a plan and a future". Also Alice claims that she does not really have a problem around on the street and if she did she would not care what people said anyway. She appears to be tough and acts and talks loudly in a frank and non-sentimental way. Alice is witty and charming and makes a show out of the interview situation while using the tape recorder as a microphone. My interpretation is that she wants to come about as a cool person who does not care about anybody, but I believe a lot of it is surface and defence. From start Alice says that people rarely know she is an exotic dancer but after some thinking she shares experiences of name-calling and the public's perception and states:

Well, sometimes people pass remarks and stuff, but to hell with them. People... you have other people who doesn't go to a strip club and don't have anything nice to say about strippers. Maybe they say we are bitches, whores, prostitutes... To be frank; not everybody is a prostitute around here... you understand? You have girls, who just dance, make their tip not even thinking of doing any business...

Alice 24

There are several possible interpretations to why some of the women show explicit indifference to bad treatment from the public. Apart from defence strategies I argue that many women who make a living from prostitution have such bad experiences of life that their current situation appears to be a good or at least a bearable alternative.

“Better Dan Locals”

I have observed that the women tend to prefer tourists and rather have them as clients than Jamaicans, mainly because dealing with foreigners often means more money. The majority of the women also seem to think that tourists are good people and along with Kempadoo: not all prostitutes classify their clients as nasty (2004:84). Fatima is one exception and she is one out of few women saying something negative about foreign as well as local customers. Fatima shares that men often treat her badly in the club and although she does not want to tell the whole story, she states that the night before was “rough” for her. Considering the state Fatima is in, it is not surprising that she comes about as a very serious, even depressed young woman. She smokes marijuana constantly during the interview and speaks quietly in Patois. I sometimes have some trouble following her. Her statement that customers often physically abuse them in the club is quite different from most other answers given by the women about their customers. Cathy for example shares that tourists are good and nice people and Sharon says that tourists are nice, that they spend more money and also treat them much better than most Jamaicans. Sharon further states that the vibe is nicer when there are a lot of tourists in the club and that she feels better and wants “to dance because the tourists tip us [them] more than the Jamaicans”. Karen, Tamiaka, Anna and Doris have the same thing to say; tourists treat them well, are nice people and spend more dollars. Natasha though is of a different opinion and says that not all tourists spend money. They as well as Jamaicans sometimes give them good business and sometimes not. Lorna claims that the tourists are “better dan locals” because they know how to deal with people, they are more literate and easy to deal with (though she says most clients are easy to deal with). Tamiaka shares her opinion and says that “tourists are easy to get along with” and that they have “nice behaviour”. Anna explains that many prostitutes prefer foreign men, from the ship, who leave the same day because then they do not risk seeing or meeting them on the street. I get the impression that the preference for tourists stems from the fact that tourists usually pay more money but Anna's statement also suggests that dealing with tourists is one way to get away from stigma and bad treatment. Local clients are likely to recognise the woman on the street and perhaps also revealing her occupation to other people.

Sofia says she perceives tourists coming to the club just as anybody else. She says she does not “see him as this big thing” and I interpret Sofia’s statements as if she thinks that many other women are looking for a foreigner to leave the country with. She states that she thinks it is good and she loves the tourists “considering the fact that they actually come to Jamaica and want us to dance for them”.

“Dancing For My Money”

All the women that I interviewed state that they are in the business because of the money, a finding supported by Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed (1999:148). Patricia Russle also confirms this notion and says that economic reality forces women to enter prostitution. The women often see themselves working just as anybody else and the majority of them say they do not perceive themselves in a bad way. Sharon tells me that she was doing the freaky show because of the money and that she did not perceive herself in any particular way. She decided to stop when people started treating her differently. This action can be explained by one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology: Symbolic Interactionism¹⁴. According to this theory Sharon, as a human, is a pragmatic actor who adjusts her behaviour to the actions of other actors. Sharon makes an interpretation of the stigmatisation action, by denoting the action symbolically and thereafter treating it and those who perform the action as symbolic objects, and she therefore decided to stop doing freaky shows (<http://web.grinnell.edu/050125>). Natasha thinks of exotic dancing/prostitution as a normal job, an honest living and she says that she cannot see anything wrong with it. Alice says she does not “give a damn what people say” and that she “love[s] her job” even if some people look down on her. A contradictory statement is though when she says that she “is at least not on road” giving me the impression that she means that she is not as low down the hierarchy as the street prostitutes. Some of the women state that they like dancing/doing business, but liking here means enjoying it because doing business gives them money. Tamiaka is ambivalent and on one hand she says that she is doing it “for money not for pleasure” but on the other hand she says that she sometimes enjoys it though it is most often difficult and hard because of the various penis sizes. The majority of the women state that they sometimes or often wish to stop doing business or dancing. Also the secretary says that after a rough night women come to her and say they “soon gonna’ stop dancing”. Sharon says she is tired of dancing at the moment because the season is slow.

I was saying to my friend I am tired of dancing... sometimes very tired but we make our money so I don't see anything wrong with it and I am not doing anything bad I am just dancing for my money.

Sharon 25

Tamiaka says she is sometimes “fed up” and that she wants to “stop selling pussy” but that her problem is that she “likes money too much ¹⁵” and that doing business pays for her house. Cathy is also in it for the money and

¹⁴ See Herbert Blumer’s *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* from 1969 for further insight.

¹⁵ Various scholars argue that besides being a survival strategy, prostitution sometimes means being able to purchase luxury goods or obtain a specific lifestyle (Cabezas 1998:82; Oppermann 1998:7). This trend of people from lower social classes wanting consumer goods etc. can be explained by Bourdieu’s class theory. Bourdieu argues for a class theory, which is formed upon movements in the social room of economic, cultural,

says first that she views herself “in no way”. She later says she perceive herself as a “good worker”, dancing and making money for her kids. She says that her children have daddies but “sometimes the daddy is not a daddy”.

Sofia first says she does not know what to say when getting the question about self-perception. She states that she does not see herself doing it for long and that she just wants to get enough money so that she can go and see her daughter. She says it is hard to save money to a plane ticket to visit her child with “no help from nobody”.

Fatima gives a deeper and somewhat different statement from the other women, although she also points out that she would not do it if it were not for the financial security.

Well I just see my self doing a work although in my deepest self of self I know that it's not right because I really shouldn't /.../ It's not a bad work... cash whatever but you can't...

Fatima 20

Sofia says that business is slow for her since she is picky when it comes to choosing whom she is going to do business with. Some of the girls are selling themselves too cheap, according to Sofia, who claims that requesting more money means keeping some dignity.

You're selling yourself... leaving your ambition for 500 dollars... come on don't do that! You're already doing business, at least put yourself at a price where you can say 'all right I'm still going to respect myself'...

Sofia 19

Between the lines it is possible to interpret that Sofia perceives herself as doing something which lowers her self-respect. She also says she would like to do something else for a living but it is hard to get a job in Jamaica without proper qualifications. Sofia excuses herself and says that she is not saying she has not “looked for a decent job”. By quoting Sofia the core of the business is summed up; it is all about money. Though Sofia says customers usually are “fathers or grandfathers type which is a turn off as well”, she goes with them because they have money.

To tell you the truth /.../ they [the tourists] are human beings just like me as far as I see but they just have money and I don't, simple as that. That's how I see him... they have money and I don't so I have to get some money so I have to talk to them. If it wasn't for that I wouldn't say a shit to anyone, if it wasn't for me wanting money in pocket in the morning I wouldn't say nothing. I wouldn't give anybody a lap dance, nothing what so ever /.../ I don't fancy those type of things... I'm just an original... or ordinary person. I go out of my expense to do certain things but talk to strangers is not me...

Sofia 19

social and symbolic capital. The structure within this room depends on how these forms of capital are divided (Skeggs 1999:20). Since many prostitutes do not have a lot of inherited capitals, the economic capital at least can be achieved through prostitution.

Conclusion

I have come to the conclusion that women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution are stigmatised since all the women I interviewed shared experiences of people calling them names and downgrading them in various ways. Prior research and other theorists (such as Goffman) as well as the professionals I interviewed support this finding. Along with i.e. Kempadoo's research, money is the main attracting factor for entering the business and the majority of the women do not perceive themselves in a particular way, they are just working for their money. Tourists are most often seen in a favourable way since they pay more money and behave nicely. Doing business with tourists might also be one way to get away from stigma. Statements from the exotic dancers show that there are hierarchies within the industry where the locals' lower perception of women working in local clubs as well as on the street, is reproduced through the exotic dancers who preferably work in upscale clubs with tourists.

Final Discussion

Wrapping up and handing in this report, that has been a part of my life for quite some time, is easier said than done. Numerous interesting angles for future research have come up while writing the paper as well as new perspectives to look at the case and connecting phenomenon. In this final part of the report I will give an brief account for two possible, interesting research topics and also share some additional comments about future structural change.

During the interviews several exotic dancers shared information about experiences of physical abuse from customers inside and outside the club. One young woman for example stated that she once was forced to stay with a man in a hotel room for an entire night. The customer did not want to pay the price they had decided and when she wanted to go back to the club, he refused to bring her there. The woman said that they “were fighting the whole night” and that she felt ashamed afterwards. A couple of my interviewees stated that some men refuse to pay for the services they receive or even take their money back after having sex. Since I believe there is a general perception in society that prostitutes cannot be raped and that bad treatment is a part of the concept I am not surprised, only saddened, by this information. Prostitutes are stigmatised and stigmatisation includes being treated badly without getting much attention from society. The women cannot make a police report since prostitution is illegal and who is standing up for these women’s rights? An interesting topic for future research would therefore be to look into the physical abuse the women experience as well as exploring the legal framework and the important aspect of female human rights.

Another interesting research topic would be to illuminate the Jamaican ‘rent-a-dread’-phenomenon from a post-colonial perspective. Franz Fanon argues in *Kempadoo* (2004:1) that:

Colonial discourses are deeply embedded in the behaviour and the psyche of the colonised, images are sedimented in the heart and the minds of Caribbean women and men and are a part of a broader colonial regime of oppression.

If I get the opportunity I would therefore like to explore the correlation between male prostitution, contemporary Jamaican dancehall culture and the reproduction of male black (hyper) sexuality having a critical, historical perspective in mind.

Finally, women who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution may have similar experiences from stigmatisation and reasons for entering the business but it is important to remember that they do not belong to a homogenous group of people. Before entering the field and talking to the women there is a risk of perceiving these women as powerless victims and already having the answers. I argue that these women deserve respect and have the right to express their thoughts and feelings without being overanalysed and neglected. This is not unproblematic and while performing my field study I, for example, recognised a significant discrepancy between my perception and the women's perception of the tourists, where my view is less positive. Having the economical aspect in mind I understand why the women say they like tourists although I argue that Western countries and especially those men who "travel specifically to purchase the sexual services of local women" in third world countries, have to be responsible and stop requiring sexual services since I perceive their actions as exploitative and opportunistic (Enloe 1989:36). There will be no real structural change as long as there is a demand for sexual services and while there are gendered divisions of power and labour, where women i.e. are under represented in decision making positions and in the job market. I do believe however that empowering the women through education and including them in the debate would most likely make many women leave the business (Campbell, Perkins & Mohammed 1999:126; Kempadoo 2001:42).

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Internet

Jamaica Aids Support

www.jamaicaaidssupport.com

Styrelsen För Internationellt Utvecklingsarbete

www.sida.se

Wordreference

www.wordreference.com/definition

Grinnell College

<http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/soc>

Limited Participant Observation

October 15, 19, 22 & November 5, 9 The Sun

November 8 & December 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 24 The Bar

Interviews

October 15 and 19 Cathy 27 years old, Exotic dancer

October 19 Patricia Russle, Market Health Authority

October 22 Sharon 25 years old, Exotic dancer

October 22 Alice 24 years old, Exotic dancer

October 22 The Secretary at the Sun

October 22 Group interview with Sharon (Exotic dancer), the secretary and the costume lady at the Sun

October 26 Lenford Harvey, Coordinator of targeted interventions at JAS

November 5 Sofia 19 years old, Exotic dancer

November 5 Fatima 20 years old, Exotic dancer

November 5 Natasha 21 years old, Exotic dancer

November 8 Group interview with Tamieka, Doris, Karen and Anna (Pier women)

November 9 Lorna 20 years old, Exotic dancer

November 9 Kerry 22 years old, Exotic dancer

December 9 Tamieka 24 years old, Pier woman

Appendix

Questions For In-Dept Interviews

The Women

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where do you live now?
4. How do think the public sees your involvement with tourists?
5. Have you ever experienced any form of ill treatment/ prejudice/ discrimination from the public (locals, tourists) because or your involvement with tourists? What happened?
6. How do you view yourself, in terms of what you do for a living?
7. What do you think about the tourists, who are coming to see you?

The Professionals

1. What is your name and occupation?
2. Can you briefly tell me what your main job tasks include and in which way you have been in contact with women and men, who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution, in Jamaica?
3. To what extent do you think that these women and men are stigmatized and marginalized by the public?
4. In what way do you think gender is a significant factor?
5. What variables for stigmatisation and marginalization are, according to you, present in society for women and men?
6. How do you think Jamaican women and men, who are involved in tourism-oriented prostitution, perceive themselves?
7. How do you think the public perceives the tourists, who are involved with prostitutes?