

Child Prostitution and Sex Tourism

CUBA

A research paper prepared for ECPAT
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7. Sex Tourism in Pattaya, Thailand

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INTRODUCTION

In Cuba, the link between tourism and prostitution is perhaps more direct than in any other country which hosts sex tourists. Although the sexual exploitation of women and children by colonists, slave holders and neocolonial elites had been a constant theme of the island's history, the post 1959 Cuban state made a sustained and successful attempt to wipe out the organised basis of prostitution. Indeed, for some commentators, this represents one of the greatest achievements of the Revolution. Randall (1974: 237), for example, opens a chapter in her book on Cuban women thus:

Cuba: Vice capital of the Caribbean! Cuba: Free Territory in America!

The "before" and "after", translated into lives... a woman who once sold her body to feed her children is now a teacher, a nurse, a secretary, cane-cutter or bookstore clerk... for the woman who was a prostitute, 1959 wrought the most dramatic change of all.

It must be borne in mind that the revolutionary state had to contend with the economic legacy of colonialism, slavery and underdevelopment, as well as with intense hostility from the United States of America, the world's leading economic power and although it sought to address the social and economic conditions which had previously underpinned the supply of prostitutes, it was hardly in a position to completely transform them. In this sense, its success in eradicating prostitution probably rested heavily upon the elimination of effective demand for commercial sex. Wealthy Cubans fled the country (as did many of the 'underworld' characters who had previously promoted and organised the kind of prostitution that serves a poorer clientele), and wealthy foreign 'playboys' no longer visited it.

In the 1980s, however, a series of events threw the Cuban economy into crisis (see Stubbs, 1989) and the state had little alternative but to respond to this by developing its tourist industry. With mass tourism came large scale effective demand for prostitution. Since many Cuban people are currently experiencing enormous economic hardship, it is not surprising that a supply of prostitutes has emerged to meet this demand.

A more general description of the phenomenon of sex tourism in Cuba and the way in which prostitution is organised there has already been provided by one of the authors (see O'Connell Davidson, 1995) and we have also written in some detail about the organisation of child prostitution in Cuba (see O'Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor, 1996). In this report, we are more specifically concerned with the experience of child prostitutes in Cuba and the identity and motivations of their clients. For the purposes of this document, 'children' will be defined as individuals below the age of

sexual consent in Cuba, i.e. under 16 years of age. After briefly noting some methodological issues and problems, we provide some information about child prostitutes and then move on to present profiles of the tourists who exploit them.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Fieldwork in Cuba was undertaken by Julia O'Connell Davidson and Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor in August 1995. The project built upon fieldwork undertaken in March of the same year, so that the information in this report, and analysis offered, draws on 29 days and nights' research. We made use of ethnographic research techniques (primarily observation and interviewing) and were also able to develop research relationships with three 'key informants': a 15 year old girl who will be referred to as Anna-Bel, a 21 year old prostitute woman who will be referred to as Lola and a 20 year old prostitute man who will be referred to as Rudolpho.

Through these informants we were able to develop links with a network of around 20 teenage prostitutes (aged between 13 and 20) working in the beach resort of Varedero. This in turn made it possible for us to 'hang out' with them in their place of work, observing the ways in which sex tourists interacted with them and interviewing them about their clients on a number of different occasions. Our repeated presence in the same bar and our relationship with this group of prostitutes also made it possible to identify and interview a group of 'regular' sex tourists who are known to local prostitutes for their sexual preference for children.

A coincidence further enriched the data we were able to gather. In March, we had visited Santiago de Cuba where our hotel room was robbed by a girl (Gretchen) to whom we had been chatting. The hotel security caught her and we ended up having to spend several hours in the police station with Gretchen and her accomplice. The police interviewed the two girls and took their statements whilst we were in the room, which meant that we knew, among other things, exactly how old they were -15 and 13. On our second field trip we met these same two girls in Varedero (some 700 km from their home town), where they were working as prostitutes. We were not only able to interview them but also to note the identity of their clients. This meant that we were able to identify more sex tourists who sexually exploit underage children and to approach them for interview.

A key problem that we faced in undertaking this research was the fact that all our interview work (except with trusted key informants) had to be covertly undertaken. Because it seemed unlikely that the Cuban Embassy would issue a work visa to researchers concerned with a topic that is currently viewed as embarrassing to the Cuban state, we entered the country on a tourist visa. This meant that we could not take the simplest route to discovering certain background details about sex tourists (namely, asking them to co-operate with general research on tourism in order to ask a series of questions about age, occupation, other holiday destinations, etc.) but had to conduct all interviews as though they were chance 'conversations'.

Although the narcissism of the average sex tourist is so great that most appeared unsurprised to find themselves closely interrogated by a total stranger (they clearly thought it only natural that a woman would want to know all about them and few asked any questions at all about why we were so inquisitive, what we did for a living and so on), it was not always possible to steer every conversation around to cover every detail that was required to complete a full data set. Table 1, which provides background information on the 24 sex tourists interviewed is therefore incomplete. It was also the case that some of the sex tourists who had a clear preference for underage girls and were fully conscious of their own criminality became suspicious about us. Their paranoia, and the need to avoid further exacerbating it, also operated as a constraint on our interviewing and observational work.

Despite these problems, we managed to interview 22 men in-depth and to conduct briefer interviews (less than one hour) with a further 12 sex tourists.

As was the case with the report on Costa Rica, we are unable to provide (any reliable information about the scale of the problem of child prostitution in Cuba. It seems probable that, by comparison with Costa Rica, and certainly by comparison with Thailand, the number of children who are sexually exploited in Cuba is small. However, it is also the case that most of the child sexual exploitation that does take place in Cuba is perpetrated by tourists.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILD PROSTITUTES IN CUBA

Cuban wages are generally somewhere between 250 and 400 pesos per month, which may be just about enough to support a very frugal existence when used within the rationed and/or subsidised state economy. But this official economy is rapidly contracting and many basic necessities can only be obtained for hard currency from tourist shops or 'black' market entrepreneurs. In the unofficial economy, the Cuban's peso income is all but worthless. For large numbers of Cubans, the pursuit of dollars has become a far more meaningful economic activity than that which takes place in formal work settings. Since tourists are the most accessible source of hard currency (it is unsurprising that many adults and children travel to tourist centres in the hope that they will somehow be able to milk tourists for a few of their dollars.

Although such '*negociacion*' does not necessarily involve commercial sex there are very few women and girls who migrate to tourist areas who do not, at some point, have to resort to prostitution. In the following pages, we highlight key features of migrant child prostitutes' experience through reference to one child's journey in and out of prostitution, a child we will ref to as Anna-Bel.

Anna-Bel is the eldest of five children and had been working as a prostitute in Varadero (Cuba's most established tourist resort) for three months when we first interviewed her in March, 1995. She was then 14 years old. Anna-Bel had returned to her home village by the time of our second trip to Cuba in August 1995 and we visited her there. Anna-Bel comes from a very small village in Ciego de Avila, a poor inland province about 500km away from Varadero.

Another 14 year old girl from the same village also prostitutes herself in Varedero and Anna-Bel reckoned that at least five girls from her school (which serves three or four such villages) had also worked as prostitutes in Varedero. Anna-Bel's father is a 42 year old agricultural worker who earns around 3 pesos per month.

Because he works in a co-operative and can obtain certain rationed items within the peso economy, the family is assured a basic subsistence. However, the shortages caused by the US blockade and other economic pressures mean that many staple goods, such as cooking oil, soap, detergent, clothing, shoes, are only available on the 'black' market for dollars. Anr Bel's father's entire income would only translate into around \$100 per month and there is thus no way in which he can furnish a family of six with anything beyond the bare minimum necessary for survival.

The family lives in a three roomed house. Four daughters share one bedroom and the parents and baby share the other. As well as the bedroom there is a dining area, a sitting area and a scullery-style kitchen. Through Western eyes, the family has very little furniture and very few personal possessions and the house is neat but bare. There is nothing squalid about the dwelling, yet the family's life is made bleak by the effects of the blockade and Cuba's other economic problems. Flies stream in from the pig sty that stands a couple of meters from the back door, they swarm around the house constantly and settle on food the moment it is placed on the table.

Anna-Bel's mother complains she can do nothing to get rid of them even if fly paper or spray or even net for the windows or doors were available in the shops, they would not be able to afford them. The red dirt of the yard outside turns into mud when it rains and because the weather is humid, it stays tacky for days or weeks. The mud gets everywhere, over the children, over their clothes and over the furniture, and trying to clean it without any kind of detergent is time consuming and demoralising. There is nothing for the children to do. They have no playthings, no paper, no books. The village itself is bleak in the same kind of way. No-one living there does anything but struggle to make ends meet in order to wake the following day and do the same thing all over again.

Before Anna-Bel left for Varedero, her father told her that she should understand how fortunate the family is to have food enough to eat, a roof over their head, even a television that can be watched for an hour or two when the electricity supply is switched on. Other families in Cuba are not so lucky. But Anna-Bel did not feel fortunate. She wanted a pair of shoes that belonged to her and her alone, instead of having to share a pair of white plimsolls with her younger sister, plimsolls that got stained by the red mud the moment she left the house and that had to be scrubbed endlessly in cold water before they could be worn again. She wanted clothes that were not ragged, she wanted shampoo and soap. She wanted to see something different, do something different. She wanted something to happen.

A 16 year old cousin, Isabel, had already visited Varedero once, having been 'recruited' by an older friend. Isabel had a baby and as well as feeling trapped in the same way as Anna-Bel did, she wanted to contribute towards the child's maintenance. She told Anna-Bel that in Varedero, all the things they longed for were readily available and

suggested that the two of them could go there, telling her 'All you have to do is go with tourists and they give you dollars and clothes and everything'.

Anna-Bel had no real idea what 'going with a tourist' would involve. Isabel had given her to understand that it referred to something sexual but since Anna-Bel herself had never had sex and had been told very little about it, this was hardly enlightening. Isabel minimised the problems she had encountered on her first trip as she wanted someone to accompany her.

Anna-Bel left the village without telling her parents what she was doing. The two girls hitch-hiked to Varedero, which took them three days, and arrived to find themselves effectively homeless and penniless. Anna-Bel was entirely without experience or knowledge of prostitution and Isabel, despite having spent a month there earlier that year, was hardly worldly wise. In Cuba, it is this, rather than the existence of formal brothel based prostitution, which makes young girls vulnerable to forms of hyper-exploitation.

In the first instance, they are open to exploitation by 'black' market renters. There is a chronic shortage of housing in Cuba and only official residents of any given town or city are entitled to accommodation. Though it is possible to privately own property, it is illegal to rent it out, so that unless people migrate for official work, there is no legitimate way to obtain housing.

Anna-Bel and her cousin managed to find a room to share in a flat with four other girls in Miramar, a town 2km from Varadero. Each girl paid \$1.50 per night to the landlady who also lived in the flat. Other prostitutes we interviewed were paying between \$1 and \$4 per night, depending upon whether the accommodation was in Varedero itself or in outlying towns or villages. These high rents effectively lock them into prostitution as a means of survival, for there is no alternative means of securing the dollars necessary to pay it.

Young girls who migrate to tourist centres to prostitute themselves are also vulnerable to a form of hyper-exploitation by sex tourists. None of the young girls we interviewed spoke any language other than Spanish and this, in combination with a lack of experience and the confidence that brings, meant that they found it very difficult to negotiate transactions with tourists. Anna-Bel, for example, never contracted to provide specific sexual services and rarely even managed to clearly negotiate a price for her services in advance. Instead, she would accompany tourists back to their hotel rooms, acquiesce to their demands and accept anything that they chose to give her the following morning. In general, they paid her the 'going rate', between \$30 and \$50 per night, but there had been occasions when tourists had given her nothing at all.

Other under-age girls reported the same problems in negotiating both the terms and the nature of transactions. There are, for example, men whose idea of fun is to get two young girls to 'perform' sexually while they watch, or to set up 'parties' involving four or more people. This was particularly distressing to the under-age prostitutes we interviewed, none of whom knew anything at all about voyeurism or even lesbianism prior to working in Varedero and saw what they were being asked to do as 'unnatural' and horrible. One sex tourist coerces under-age girls into this type of act by threatening to report them to the police for theft if they do not comply with his wishes.

Because many of the younger *jinteras* (Cuban slang for prostitutes, which literally means 'jockey' as women are perceived to be riding tourists) are inexperienced and lack confidence they are often relatively passive in terms of initiating contact with prospective clients. In the bars, these girls tend to spend their time dancing, joking, giggling (sometimes weeping) with each other, trying to catch the attention of male tourists but rarely approaching them directly. This opens the door for yet another variant of third party involvement. Older and more experienced *jinteras* will assume the role of intermediary, effecting introductions and negotiating on the child's behalf, charging a fee for so doing.

Children like Anna-Bel are especially vulnerable to this added layer of exploitation. She is physically very immature, standing about 4'10", with hands and feet the size of a child much younger than her 14 years. She dresses in a childlike fashion which emphasises her diminutive stature and her mannerisms are those of a little girl rather than a teenager. She is thus ideal fodder for men with a specific sexual interest in just-pubertal girls and older *jinteras* who recognise this type of demand are quick to exploit an acquaintance with girls like this.

Finally, girls like Anna-Bel and her cousin are vulnerable to sexual abuse and economic exploitation by corrupt policemen and by pimps. In Cuba as a whole there is probably less police corruption than in most countries of the world but Varedero is an exceptional place and local people say that corruption is widespread. Prostitutes told us that they are frequently intimidated by plain clothes policemen, as well as by their snitches, who demand dollars

and/or clothing from them. Stories about sexual intimidation and rape by police are also commonplace, though we only spoke to one prostitute who had herself experienced this.

Meanwhile, though there is very little formal third party involvement in prostitution in Cuba, there are men who pimp on an opportunistic, *ad hoc* basis, generally from within the context of an abusive relationship with the girl concerned.

After Isabel and Anna-Bel had been in Varedero for about a month, for instance, they met up with a man named Yuggi. He is 20 and comes from Varedero where he lives with his family. Yuggi and his two brothers are muscle-bound, bleach haired young men, *jinteros* (masculine equivalent *jinteras*) who help European and North American women to indulge in a Chippendale fantasy whilst on holiday. But much easier money is to be made from girls like Anna-Bel and Isabel.

Yuggi runs a series of relationships with such girls -he was 'dating' Isabel, Anna-Bel and another 14 year old prostitute from Santiago de Cuba in March and had two freshly arrived 15 year olds on the go when we returned in August. He abuses these children in a number of ways: demanding sex (usually unsafe sex - there is nowhere private for them to go, so such men take the girls into the sea to have sexual intercourse with them); demanding money and physically abusing them. Anna-Bel, for example, was giving Yuggi \$10 out of every \$20 she made. When she was unable to find clients he beat her.

Isabel was picked up by the police in April. She was tried and sentenced, to four years in prison. The sentence has subsequently been reduced to two years, but she is being held in a prison far from her home village and none of her family has been able to visit her. She will not see her child until it almost three years old. As is the case all over the world, the law punishes prostitutes but seldom intervenes with their clients. We heard a rumour that last year one tourist had been picked up and charged with a sexual offence against an under-age girl.

Given the fact that so many men so openly use child prostitutes in Varedero and that prostitutes and seasoned clients alike will point out the plain clothes policemen 'working' in the bars where these girls solicit, one can only assume that (if the rumour is true) this tourist must have either committed extremely violent crime or have failed to offer the police a sufficiently large inducement to get off (perhaps both).

Yuggi's demands for cash meant that Anna-Bel was unable to save money in Varedero and in April what little she had managed to buy herself in way of clothes was robbed from the apartment in which she was staying. She wanted to go home but felt ashamed to return empty handed, besides which she was unsure how to get home. Eventually, Yuggi beat her so badly that she sent a telegraph to her father asking him to come and collect her. Her father, who had had no idea where Anna-Bel was and had lost a stone in weight worrying about her, came immediately to fetch her.

Back in her village, Anna-Bel helps her mother around the home. She has not returned to school because she has missed too much and failed her exams. She cannot legally work until she is 17. She feels guilty and ashamed of her 'past'. There is no-one to counsel her or help her come to terms with the sexual and physical abuse to which she was subjected in Varedero. She still does not own a pair of shoes.

It comes as no surprise that the well heeled, adult men who go to Cuba to have sexual intercourse with girls like Anna-Bel are indifferent both to the conditions which lead them to prostitution and their suffering as a consequence of it. After all, if they did not dehumanise and objectify such children they would hardly be capable of taking advantage of their misfortunes in this way.

What is perhaps more surprising is the 'party line' on prostitutes currently adopted by the *Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas* (FMC), about the only formal organisation in Cuba from which women and children might be able to expect support and aid. This 'line' is so similar to that adopted by right wing Western politicians about their own poor, homeless and sexually exploited that it almost beggars belief. *Jiniteras* are accused of having 'low moral values', of being 'greedy' and 'covetous'.

Unlike pre-revolutionary prostitutes who were 'forced' into prostitution in order to subsist or to provide for their children, today's *jiniteras* are 'goodtime girls' in search of easy money. We were told by one party faithful in Varedero that prostitution was a terrible thing because girls like Anna-Bel 'brought shame on Cuba' and 'gave tourists a bad impression' of Cuban women. The fact that around 80% of the tourists to Varedero visit the town only because they are actively seeking opportunities to sexually exploit other people's economic misfortunes appeared to have escaped her entirely

One of the most painful things to learn about the Cuban women and girls who prostitute themselves to tourists is that most of them internalise their society's view of them as immoral, superficial and worthless. Thus, while sex tourists tell you how wonderfully sexually permissive Cuban culture is, women like Lola (a 21 year old who wants

to be able to buy clothes, toys and books for her four year old daughter and to buy a home so that both she and her daughter can have a bedroom each instead of sharing one in her own parent's home) tell you that they hope one day to find a respectable Cuban man to marry them, someone who will cleanse them of their 'stain' and ensure that their children will not have to carry their 'shame'.

While sex tourists tell you how 'natural' and 'uninhibited' these girls are, 15 year olds get crying drunk in bars and tell you that they are '*chicas malas*', and that no-one will ever be able to love them. The very ambiguity of these girls' status, *jiniteras* rather than professional *putas* (whores or bitches) - an ambiguity which most sex tourists find very pleasing - increases the guilt and anxiety associated with sex work.

Recognising prostitution as a 'job' and taking a businesslike approach to it protects the woman's self esteem to some degree by making quite transparent the fact that the acts she performs with or for clients has absolutely nothing to do with her own sexuality. A prostitute who fails to self-identify as a prostitute is left with an extremely undermining view of herself; instead of seeing herself as a person making a rational choice out of an invidious bunch of alternatives, she runs the risk of beginning to believe herself to be all those things which clients attribute to her -promiscuous, sexually indiscriminate, hypersexual, immoral.

We interviewed more than forty prostitute women and children in the course of two field trips to Cuba, and almost all of them recounted life stories which were tragic in themselves. Especially poignant is the case of a 23 year old mother of a disabled child who came to Varedero to prostitute herself in the hope of being able to save enough money to buy a decent home and enough clothing for him. While she was there, her son died. No-one knew how to contact her and she returned home to Las Tunas after a month to find he had been buried two weeks earlier.

The idea that on top of everything else, these women and children recriminate themselves and imagine themselves to be somehow dirtied and debased is unbearable. Indeed, there are ways in which the psychological impact of this form of prostitution seems to resemble that of incestuous abuse. The young girls we interviewed saw themselves as complicit in ways which made them feel intensely guilty, for example. Their sense of complicity is reinforced by the doublespeak of the FMC and of the sex tourists themselves, a doublespeak which attributes 'agency' to the powerless party and absolves the powerful party of all responsibility, calling teenage girls 'temptresses' and adult men their 'victims'.

There are some child prostitutes who are less painfully naive than AnnaBel and who, in this sense, perhaps partially match the FMC's description of them. The girls who robbed us in Santiago, for instance, are hardly exemplars of self-disciplined socialist virtuosity. In Varedero, they were continuing to supplement their earnings from prostitution with theft and it may well be true that their value system is one which places possession of fashionable clothing above other more collective, noble or spiritual aspirations.

But it is also true that it is wealthy men many years their senior who take advantage of these 'values' and that while these men walk away from encounters with such teenagers swaggering, satisfied and entirely free of the threat of prosecution, the girls display all the same behavioural symptoms that sexually abused children the world over display: anxiety, depression, an obsessive interest in their own sexuality, low self esteem, etc.

The idea that the only 'protection' their society can offer them is a period of imprisonment and 're-education' is almost as obscene as the idea that the imprisonment of their abusers is unlikely and the re-education' of such men is not even on any government's agenda.

So far as the prostitution of prepubertal children in Cuba goes, we are unable to provide any reliable information. Many of the conditions which allow sex tourists to abuse prepubertal children in other countries exist in Cuba - poverty, private accommodation, corrupt officials etc. and it is not uncommon to find adult Cubans (who usually claim to be the child's relative) using young children to beg on tourist beaches. We heard many rumours to the effect that such people also sell sexual access to these children, but found it difficult to substantiate them.

We interviewed a man in his 50s who was begging with a child of nine years. He told us that such things happen but denied having ever sold his niece to tourists. The little girl also spoke to us and told us that she had many tourist 'friends', all of whom were male. She said that she sometimes visited them in their apartments and that an Italian man had once given her and her uncle a present of \$70.

The presence of her uncle made it impossible to press her for details about these 'friendships'. The most we can say is that it seems likely that this kind of abuse does occur.

We are also unable to provide reliable information about the sexual exploitation of male children. We heard rumours about male homosexual tourists sexually exploiting teenage boys but did not observe any such men with Cuban children. This lack of visibility could be because homosexuality is heavily stigmatised in Cuba (it is still illegal to publicly display homosexuality), but if this were the case, it would make Cuba an unlikely destination for the homosexual sex tourist.

'Rudolpho' told us that when he first arrived in Varedero at the age of 16 he had a two week long sexual 'relationship' with a Canadian woman of 62. However, while there are a small number of female sex tourists in Cuba, the women we observed were all with men in their early twenties rather than with children.

PROFILES OF SEX TOURISTS WHO USE UNDER-AGE PROSTITUTES IN CUBA

The background characteristics of the sex tourists we interviewed in Cuba are shown in Table 1. The age range was from 22 to 68 and the majority of this sample occupy relatively privileged socio-economic positions in their home countries. Over 90% of them were on return visits to Cuba and three quarters of those asked had also visited other well known sex tourist destinations such as the Dominican Republic, Thailand and the Philippines. Around two thirds of them were staying in private accommodation rather than in hotels.

Out of a sample of 24 men, we know with reasonable certainty that 13 had had sex with under-age girls while holidaying in Cuba (we take as certain those cases where the man actually admitted this to us or where we both observed them behaving in a proprietorial way with girls we knew to be underage and asked the girls to confirm that the man had actually purchased her 'services').

In other words, we are sure that 38% of our sample had sexually exploited girls under the age of 16. This sample cannot be used to make generalisations about the percentage of all sex tourists who use under-age girls since we were specifically trying to find and interview men who do have a sexual interest in young girls. Profiles of some of the sex tourists we interviewed are provided here.

Jake

Jake is a 46 year old unmarried Canadian from Montreal who spends most of his time living in Latin America and the Caribbean. He funds his wanderings in two main ways: by writing magazine articles and books on diet and fitness for women and by running cigars between Cuba and Canada. He clearly considers himself to be both set apart from and a cut above his fellow countrymen. Canada and the States are, he says, 'TV land' and the mass of the people there are unintelligent, superficial and materialistic.

Unlike them, he is a youthful 'free spirit'. He displays this to the world through various ludicrous affectations - striding into the sea to swim without taking off either his clothes or his bum-bag, for example. He appears to be inordinately anxious about his own ageing. He wears his hair peroxided, permed and shoulder length, carries the kind of fashion accessories that are popular with people 20 years his junior and is obsessed by the marks of ageing upon other people.

Like many other sex tourists, Jake believes that sexual mores are very different in 'the third world' where people are 'free' and 'natural' about their sexuality. He explains this 'difference' in the following way:

Kids grow up with sex here and know it's a calming and good thing. They sleep ten to a room, so children hear their parents fuck... subconsciously they know it's a good thing. They associate it with a release... tension builds up, then their parents fuck, and everything is OK.

According to Jake, women and girls in 'the third world' are 'natural' and 'in tune with their bodies'. In Cuba the girls 'come from the jungle with no shoes... they'd fuck on the streets if it wasn't for the police'. He told one of the authors, a black woman, that the fact she had no wish to take up his invitation to 'fuck' him demonstrated that she had 'lost touch with her roots'. The same generous offer was not extended to the other author, a white woman, whose biology clearly 'rooted' her in a non-sexual world.

As an ageing hippie, Jake's beliefs about his own and other people's sexuality are linked to a set of ideas about 'healthy, natural living' and the release of 'tension' -he refers to his nightly sexual exploitation of prostitute women as 'getting a massage', for instance.

In effect, this 'alternative medicine' model produces a view of male sexuality accepted by a majority of sex tourists - a belief that men's physical well being is endangered if they are unable to penetrate women's vaginas on demand.

As with other sex tourists we have interviewed, Jake enjoys the sense of freedom and control which his economic power brings him in 'third world' countries. This power not only enables him to live well in terms of housing, food, entertainment etc. but also allows him to reduce other human beings to mere objects. When his offer of sex was turned down by the aforementioned author, for instance, he attempted to make the proposition more 'interesting' in the following way:

You don't want to fuck me? How'd you like to watch me fuck another girl? You can come along and watch. You don't have to do anything, just watch. Pick a girl, any girl, any size, any colour, pick any girl you like.

As he said this, he gestured around the bar toward Cuban women and girls as if they were but commodities in a supermarket. His money gives him the power to command their bodies, even if only to be used as a vehicle for sexual access to another, momentarily more desirable, woman.

James

James is a 48 year old Canadian. He teaches in an engineering department of a college in Ontario and is referred to by his male sex tourist friends as 'the professor'. He is unmarried and spends his annual three month summer vacation travelling in 'third world countries' and practising sex tourism. He had previously visited Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia and a number of Latin American countries.

This year he had 'done' the Trans-Siberian Express and spent a month in China before coming to Cuba to 'recuperate' for two weeks. It was his fifth visit to Cuba.

James does not see himself as a client even though he gives money to the girls and women with whom he has sexual intercourse. 'There's a big difference between making a business deal with a prostitute and meeting someone you like, talking to each other and then hopping into bed', he told us. James describes himself as a 'gentleman' and he maintains and develops this image of himself through the denigration of 'third world' men.

Unlike him and other white men, Cuban men abuse their women and children. They are physically violent and do not treat women as 'ladies'. This is all 'down to Latin machismo', he explained.

James styles himself as a 'funny-man'. He sits in bars surrounded by prostitute women and children and 'clowns about'. He affects deafness so that the girls have to lean closer to speak to him, at which point he touches their bottoms and then pretends that it was someone else who touched them; he walks around the bar with the stilted movements of an automaton; he performs conjuring tricks with coins and serviettes; he blows up balloons and fashions them into the shape of a penis.

It is the kind of 'joking around' that, when less overtly sexual, adults often imagine that children enjoy. James told me that back in Canada people think he is a bit of an 'eccentric' but describe him as 'good with children'. In Cuba, his delight in this childish world can be more given a more direct expression. The prostitute he 'dated' on the nights we observed him was 15 years old.

Bruce, John and Mark

Bruce, John and Mark are a group of Canadians, all in their 40s, who make between four and five trips per year to Cuba, flying directly from Toronto or Montreal to Varedero. None of them could be described as short of money (Bruce works in a motor company as an electrical designer and owns two houses, two cars and a boat; Mark is a semi-retired real estate dealer) but they fund their frequent trips to Cuba by smuggling clothing, watches and jewellery from Canada into Cuba and Cuban cigars back into Canada.

These men stay in *casas particulares* rather than hotels in Varedero and have several Cuban friends who are active on the 'black' market with whom they do business. Mark and John's sexual tastes are known to local male hustlers who procure young girls for them in exchange for money, goods and/or cigar business. It is rumoured that these men also like to make videos and it may well be that such amateur pornography is among the contraband they smuggle.

Mark has a very specific sexual preference for young teenagers. He approaches girls who either are, or who look about 13 years old, and asks 'Are you my baby? My baby, si? You're my baby, si?'. The 13 and 14 year olds who had had sex with him told us that he is extremely tight fisted, only paying them \$5 or \$10 for a night and asking them to do things that they did not want to do. In particular, he likes to 'buy' two girls and command them to have sex with each other.

Over the five nights we observed him, he had no dealings with any prostitute over the age of 15. John likewise has a preference not only for younger girls but for threesomes, 'parties' and so on with under-age prostitutes. John is divorced and speaks with great bitterness about Canadian women's power over men, a 'power' which is evidenced primarily through their legal right to alimony payments. Bruce likes women to be 'ladies'.

He finds it 'unattractive' for a woman to smoke, drink or swear. He is contemptuous of women he defines as 'real' prostitutes and does not consider the Cuban *jiniteras* he fucks to be prostitutes. They are often 'nice girls' from 'good families' who just want some clothes and some fun.

He had a long term relationship with the 26 year old daughter of a Cuban neurosurgeon, for example, who spoke excellent English and was herself a qualified doctor. There was a 20 year age difference between them as well as a massive inequality in terms of economic power. Any 26 year old doctor from a comparable socio-economic background in Canada would probably judge Bruce to be a fairly unremarkable and mediocre man yet he was certain that his Cuban woman 'was *really* in love with' him.

He had even investigated the possibility of marriage and it was this that ended the relationship for, in his words:

It brought everything home to me. It would've cost me \$45,000 to get her out of Cuba [the cost of her medical training], plus she would've had to spend another two years in medical school in Canada before she could have practised, plus the Canadian government would make me sign a guarantee that I'd support her financially for ten years. It was just too much. I'm a realist. What if I paid all that and then she found herself some young guy? It was a dead end relationship. They're all dead end relationships. This is a fantasy world, even she called it that, *fantasia*'.

In other words, Bruce did not wish to compete on a level playing pitch. It is a fantasy world because it is so easy for him to forget that it is his economic power and not his personal magnetism which draws women to him.

We did not observe Bruce with any under-age prostitutes but he was unperturbed by his friends' sexual activities with children and his attitude towards his own illegal practices (smuggling and 'black' market trading) were revealing. He told us that the 'great thing' about Cuba is that because it is a communist country 'everyone is terrified of the authorities'.

What this means is that no matter what a tourist does, he is 'OK'. As Bruce put it, 'No Cuban is going to report a tourist to the police. They know that they'd be in much deeper shit than you'd be'. John and Mark also appear to feel that they live outside the law in Cuba. In fact, the following episode involving Mark suggests that he believes himself to *be* the law.

One evening, Mark angrily accosted a 13 year old prostitute in a bar and accused her of stealing money from him. She denied it and Mark grew more aggressive, shouting furiously at her and the other women and girls around her 'You're nothing, you're just putas, I'm a tourist'. He threatened to call the police, telling them he could have them all put in prison and demanding that they show him their *carnets* (I.D. cards).

The women and children, all of whom were thoroughly intimidated by him (the 13 year old was crying), were about to produce their *carnets* to show him when one of the authors (Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor) intervened, saying that he had no right to make such a demand, that he was not a policeman and besides, what had he been doing with a 13 year old child in his room that she might steal from him in the first place?

This challenge to his authority made Mark shake with fury. He turned on Jacqueline, whom he took to be a Cuban *jinitera*, shouting 'Who do you think you are? You're nothing, you're nobody' but his Spanish was not fluent enough to deal with the situation. He ended up following her to where the other author was sitting. 'Do you speak English?' he asked, still shaking with rage. 'Then tell her to keep out of other people's business'. Turning back to Jacqueline he said, 'You'd better be very careful. For \$20 I can have you hurt badly. For \$50, I can have you killed'.

This story reveals a great deal about the way in which such a man can and does imagine himself in Cuba. Mark is a physically nondescript and puny individual, a divorcee in his forties and a less than completely successful estate agent. Back home in Canada, it is he who feels himself to be a 'nobody' and a 'nothing'. In Cuba, by contrast, he fantasises himself to be somewhere between a Rockefeller and a Mafiosi boss.

He believes that his economic power combined with his status as 'tourist' places him above the law and under-age prostitutes told us that he attempts to coerce them into having sex with him and performing for him by threatening to report them to the police for theft if they do not do what he tells them.

The Guilty Widower

This man is a Spaniard, aged 52, a practising Catholic and a fairly successful and bourgeois businessman whose wife died at the beginning of 1995. It was his first trip to Cuba and he had come on a two week package tour of Havana and Varedero with a group of male friends. We met him at the end of his holiday and he clearly felt the need to confess. He had, he told us, been amazed and shocked to find himself relentlessly pursued by women and girls in Varedero. 'It's very difficult for a man. What can you do? They won't leave you alone'. He said that this had all been a new experience for him, that he had never had sex with a black woman before and that the first woman he had picked up in Varedero was:

a very dark black woman, very beautiful, how could I resist? But I liked her, I did like her as a person. You have to like a woman as a person, I couldn't get involved in just a cold situation, it has to be romantic. You have to have dinner, be able to talk.

He described all his sexual encounters as a result of 'irresistible temptation' having been placed in his path. He was self-piteous about his own situation as a widower, saying how it was easy for the married men to 'resist' temptation. Some of the girls are very young, he told us, only 15 or 16 years old, 'so beautiful' and chasing after him, 'What could I do?' he kept repeating. 'The only way to get rid of them is to push them off and run away'.

So how had he 'got rid' of them after he had had sexual intercourse with

You have to give them something. You feel obliged to give money or a gift, otherwise it would be like violence to them. It would be like rape... I bought one girl a bikini... They aren't prostitutes... Their situation is desperate... I respect women... I treated these girls well, I know their situation is terrible. They have nothing... [Why not just give them money as a gift then?] You have to have sex with them, they feel obliged to do something for you in return.

He had had sex with a 15 year old girl who would not now leave him alone. She wanted to travel to Havana with him to spend the final days of his holiday with him. He did not want her to accompany him. 'The Spanish are too romantic' he told us, 'they end up falling in love and marrying these girls. They take them back to Spain with them and the girls just divorce them a few years later'.

Did he feel guilty about having had sex with an under-age girl? 'Very guilty, yes. I'm going to go back home and examine my conscience. I'll go to confession'. Did he think he would ever return to Cuba? 'Perhaps, yes'.

Quebecian Retire

This man is a 68 year old retired civil engineer from Montreal. He takes two trips a year, one to Cuba and one to Venezuela, and has been doing so for the past twelve years. He started visiting Cuba on the advice of a friend who has been taking holidays in Varedero since 1980. He considers Venezuela to be more responsive to tourists' 'needs' than Cuba, which he berated as follows:

Nothing works in the hotels, there's not even hot water all the time. They won't let you take lady friends in the hotels, they try to charge you money... Everyone is corrupt, the police are corrupt, the hotel security is corrupt, everyone is corrupt... You have to take girls to *casa particulars* and they're dirty, they're filthy, there's no shower for you after you've made love.

This man then went into a long diatribe about Cuban 'whores':

Look at them, they're all whores. They want to rob you, they try to cheat you... They harass [derangent] you... It's changed here, even in the last few months. They're better off now, these girls, they want everything.

One might be forgiven for wondering why, when he finds the country so displeasing, he returns to visit it year after year. A possible explanation was provided by two 13 year old prostitutes and by Rudolpho (one of our key informants) all of whom were familiar with this man's sexual tastes. He is attracted to very young girls - when 13 year olds are procured for him, he complains that they are too old (this may account for the problems he experiences with hotel security). He likes to take such girls into a room and masturbate as he watches them undress.

Charlie

Charlie is an Italian-Canadian, an unmarried semi-retired cabinet maker aged 54. He was on his fourth visit to Cuba and had visited the Dominican Republic twice as well as taking regular trips to Mexico over the past six years. Like many other sex tourists, he funds his trips to Cuba by smuggling clothing into the country and cigars out of it. He prefers to give clothes to the Cuban women and children with whom he has sexual intercourse rather than paying them in cash, as he has friends in the rag trade in Canada and can get items of clothing for a matter of cents.

He was holidaying this time with a male friend, Nigel, also Italian Canadian and some ten years his junior. Charlie and Nigel were both regular prostitute-users in Canada and had both used prostitutes while living or travelling in Europe as well as in Latin America.

Charlie told us a story about an 'experience' in Germany (where he he lived for some months) from which we infer that he has been prosecuted in the past for the sexual abuse of children. He said that he used to invite girls aged between 11 and 14 into his apartment sometimes and that on one occasion a neighbour had called the police. The girl in question had been interrogated and Charlie was taken in for questioning. He did not say what the outcome was but did say that he is now very careful not to have dealings with under-age prostitutes in Europe or North America because it 'isn't worth the trouble'.

Charlie is a man whose attitudes and capacity to dehumanise others is: frightening and the two hours spent listening to him were disturbing. Yet because he wanted to defend his behaviour and was intelligent enough to articulate a rationale for it, he was an extremely useful informant. Charlie openly admits to sexually exploiting children of 12 and 13 years old in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. He justifies this in the first instance through a form of cultural relativism.

In 'third world countries', Charlie argues, attitudes toward sexuality and childhood are very different from those adopted in the West. An Argentinean friend who lives in the Dominican Republic had once picked up two 13 year old girls and explained to Charlie 'it was OK to fuck them'. No-one cares in the Dominican Republic, the police don't care, the kids parents don't care, there are no laws against it [sic], because it is seen as natural. Children grow up faster in places like this than they do in industrialised countries.

In Canada, a seven year old has to be looked after by its parents or else it will wreck the house. In non-industrialised countries, seven year old children look after their baby brothers and sisters. They mature more quickly. But it is not only age that carries a different meaning. The meanings that are attached to sexual acts are also culturally relative. 'There are no taboos about sex here', he told us, 'it's a very open, physical culture'.

The next step in his 'logic' is to assert that children who grow up in these 'open' and 'natural' cultures are sexually knowing. Take Cuba as another example, he continued. Two days previously he had been approached by a 12 year old girl. She told him that she had been divorced for two years, that she had been married at ten:

How can you call that a child? All right, she was 12 years old, but she was a lady. She'd been married for two years. There's no law against it here. Her parents agreed to it. She'd been sexually active for two years. She was a lady. Why should I treat her any different?... Why should we impose our moral standards? Who's to say that our moral standards are right and their's are wrong?... When in Rome, do as the Romans, that's what they say isn't it?

Charlie's Spanish was far from fluent and his account of the 12 year old's story is unreliable for that reason alone. Moreover, his understanding of the law in the economically underdeveloped countries he visits is far from accurate, but the real point to note is that although he argues his case through an appeal to moral relativism (why should the West impose its moral standards on the rest of the world?), he is actually committed to Western concepts of childhood.

Western thought defines childhood as a period of sexual innocence, and thus for Charlie, any child who has sexual experience ceases to be a child. In fact, he takes this further and believes that any child who so much as appears (through his eyes) to be sexually knowing is not really innocent and therefore not really a child:

Have you seen the kids dance here? Six year olds wagging their behinds, it's really sexual, even two year olds, we saw this little kid the other day, two years old and she was moving her hips, you know, dancing with the mother, moving her body so sexual. They mature young, they're sexual from a young age.

Setting up this polar opposition between the 'sexually knowing', 'sexually innocent' child allows Charlie to tell himself that there is no difference between child and adult prostitutes, and that it is therefore no more morally reprehensible for him to exploit a child prostitute than it is for him to exploit an adult woman prostitute. The 13 year old girl in the Dominican Republic and the 12 year old Cuban girl both 'knew exactly what they were doing'.

He argued that it was a nonsense for people to say that children 'innocent' when they are capable of doing evil. What about the James Bulger case in England, he asked. Two ten year olds planned a murder and carried it out in cold blood, children are just as manipulative and evil as adults so how can anyone say that these girls don't know what they're doing they go out on the streets soliciting?

Take the girl in the Dominican Republic. She and her friend approached him and the Argentinean, they negotiated a price and went back to the apartment with them. The Argentinean took one of the girls into a bedroom and he, Charlie, looked at the other 13 year old. 'She was expecting some and it wasn't a lollipop. So I let her have it'.

Charlie claims that he does not actively seek out young girls. It is the girls who approach him and he does not differentiate on grounds of age (any girl who solicits is, after all, by definition a sexual adult). He repeated over and over again that it is 'opportunity that makes the thief', and placed prostitution within his more general set of beliefs about prostitutes, namely that these are females who exploit men's weakness. The 12 year old Cuban girl as much as the adult Canadian prostitute consciously takes advantage of men's biological 'urge' for sex.

He told us he 'hates' prostitutes. He has used prostitutes all over the world and he hates European and North American prostitutes in particular:

It's all businesslike. It's by the hour, like a taxi service, like they got the meter running... There's no feeling. If I wanted to fuck a rubber doll, I could buy one and inflate it. Here it's different. They're not professionals. They enjoy sex, it's natural to them... they're affectionate... they're responsive. They even kiss you. A prostitute in Europe will never kiss you. Canada, it's ridiculous. You know, if you go with a prostitute and you don't pay her, you know what? They call it rape. You can be in court on a rape charge.

He likes the powerlessness of prostitutes in Cuba, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. 'Here, they don't even ask for the money. It's up to you'. In Cuba, sometimes he gives the girl her taxi fare home as well as an item of clothing but he enjoys the knowledge that, as he put it, 'if you don't pay a girl here, there's nothing she can do. She's not supposed to be with you anyway. It's just tough'. The non-contractual nature of prostitution in countries like Cuba and Thailand appeals to 'Mr. Average' type sex tourists because it allows them to deny the commercial basis of their sexual encounters and to tell themselves that the girls are not really prostitutes and they themselves are not really clients.

But Charlie is clear that such women and children are prostitutes and despises them for their 'immorality'. 'Who's to blame for prostitution?' he asks, and answers, 'It's the prostitutes, isn't it? If they weren't there, there wouldn't be any prostitution. They create the situation, they make the opportunities and opportunity makes the thief'.

Again, he does not distinguish between adult and child prostitute

I don't go looking for little girls. But if a 15 year old or a 12 year old, if she approaches me, if she comes up to me, what am I supposed to do? If I didn't go with her, what would I be?

We pushed him to say where exactly he would draw the line – what if a nine year old approached him, or a seven year old, for example? He not answer this directly but instead kept saying that it was not up to him to draw the line since he does not initiate such encounters but merely responds to 'opportunities'/expectations of him. This was interwoven with reference back to the idea that a sexually knowing child is not a child but a conscious seductress and, most frightening of all, it was in this context that he again of the two year old child dancing 'provocatively'.

If the culture allows it and the parents allow it, and the girl wants it he went on, where is the harm? There is no psychological harm if every one accepts that it is natural and no physical harm done. What is the fuss about? It's hypocrisy. He supported his claim that no physical harm was done (referring to something he claimed to have read about rape:

It said that if a man uses a condom, after five minutes, just five minutes after a rape, there's no physical evidence that a girl's even been raped. Doctors can't even tell. The female body is designed to take the man's penis, it doesn't do any damage, there's no physical harm.

Charlie's attitudes towards prostitution and sexuality are easier to understand when considered in relation to his more general attitudes to gender. He spoke at length and with enormous bitterness about male disadvantage. Mothers train their daughters and prepare them for sexual and emotional life. They teach girls how to look pretty, how to sit, how to cross their legs, how to attract men and please them.

But they teach their sons none of these things. The boy is 'neglected' and then, all of a sudden, he is expected to be a man, to be in charge, to know how to deal with women. He is suddenly expected to fight in wars, expected 'to fuck whores', expected to be a real man. The mother is even happy if he dies for his country so long as she gets a flag, neatly folded and a letter saying that her son was brave. The mother doesn't care if her son goes out 'and fucks some dirty whore', she just says 'Good, that shows he's a man'.

Boys get no care, they are not allowed to show emotion. They might be hurt but they have to conceal it, they're not allowed to cry. And no-one has told them how to please women. They reach the age of 15 or 16, they have biological urges, they need to find a girlfriend, so they go out and find themselves humiliated and the girl is just laughing. She knows exactly what to do. 'Men are like yo-yos, emotionally they're controlled by women. It's always women who hold the strings'.

Charlie is not difficult to psychoanalyse. His sexuality is pure infantilism. He is consumed with rage against the mother who 'withheld' care and affection from him and obsessed by the idea of being able to command sexual access in order to reverse the various humiliations which he believes he has suffered at women's hands.

Western prostitutes are not fully satisfying to him because, although he can obtain sexual access to them on demand, they are in a position to set limits on what he can and cannot do, to tell him how much to pay. In this sense, 'whores', as much as madonnas, 'hold the strings'. He is humiliated by their control and his masculinity is therefore incompletely asserted through the act of having sexual intercourse them.

With a Cuban prostitute on the other hand, especially a child prostitute, it is quite clearly him in control and he simultaneously becomes 'the real man' that he feels is expected of him and punishes 'authority' for having such an expectation of him. The latter is important, because Charlie is not just driven by rage against those who have withheld care, he is also obsessed by the idea of authority figures betraying and controlling him. He was angry with his mother, with the church, with the state.

He spoke at length about the hypocrisy and corruption of the powers that be. Governments make their laws and try to impose 'moral standards' but do powerful people live by them? No. So why should he?

Charlie's relationship with authority, especially as constituted by the law, is ambiguous. On the one hand, he blames 'authority' for not holding him in check. He sexually abuses children in Cuba and the Dominican Republic because no authority stops him (the child's parents don't care, the police don't care, nobody cares, so why should he?).

He does not sexually abuse children in Europe or North America because the authorities do stop him. It is not up to him to 'draw the line', he is a passive victim of his own biologically programmed 'needs' and must have someone else (a mummy?) to help him control himself.

He furiously resents any attempt to constrain him and interprets 'obedience' to authority as a sign of weakness. When his travelling companion Nigel disagreed with his views on child prostitutes, Charlie viciously and relentlessly attacked him for being 'easily led' and not an 'individual', for getting his ideas from newspapers instead of 'analysing' things for himself.

PSYCHODYNAMIC EXPLANATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION BY TOURISTS

To what extent can the sexual exploitation of child prostitutes by the sex tourists we observed and interviewed be explained through reference to individual psychology?

Psychologists sometimes characterise paedophiles as 'narcissists' who conceive of childhood as a period during which individuals are the 'focus of uncritical, maternal admiration' and are attracted not towards a particular child or children but to 'what these children represent as imagined replicas' of themselves as children (see Ennew, 1986: 51).

The men profiled above would not all conform to clinical definitions of 'paedophile' since they are chiefly attracted to post rather than pre-pubertal children. Yet, in the sense that men like Charlie, Mark, Jake and John also seem to be angry with a society that does not concur with their own much inflated view of themselves and more particularly, a society that imposes constraints on them rather than indulging them absolutely, the concept of narcissism is useful in understanding their motivations. Sex tourism satisfies their narcissism by giving them a space within which their own image of themselves is reflected back (they can see themselves as economically, socially and sexually powerful, and it also makes it possible to transcend the rules that constrain them at home and so to flout authority.

The desire to challenge authority and assert control over other people as sexual beings appears to be strongly related to these men's sense of their own masculinity, and the psychoanalyst Robert Stoller's discussion of perversion is enlightening in this respect. Stoller argues that in men:

perversion may be at bottom a gender disorder (that is, a disorder in the development of masculinity and femininity) constructed out of a triad of hostility: *rage* at giving up one's earliest bliss and identification with the mother, *fear* of not succeeding in escaping out of her orbit and a need for *revenge* for her putting one in this predicament (1975:99).

In word and deed, these men express rage at not being the central focus of an adoring and indulgent gaze, at not being able to *command* a woman's undivided attention and unswerving loyalty. Adult women who are their economic, social and/or legal equals are perceived as hugely threatening not because they actually control men but because they are in a position to control *themselves*, that is to say, to exercise choice over whether or not to meet a man's demands.

It is no good marrying a Cuban woman and taking her back to Canada where she would be in a position to choose to end the relationship. It is no good entering into a long term relationship with a Western woman who is in a position to decide whether or not she wants to give you your nightly 'massage'. It is not even any good using a prostitute if she is in a position to determine the limits of the contractual exchange. For a woman to be in position to exercise choice is for her to assert her separateness, her free will, her capacity to freely withdraw from the relationship and thus to arouse these men's infantile rage.

One glimpses both the fear and revenge that Stoller refers to in the dire (hostility expressed by Charlie, and by Mark's shouting 'You're nothing you're just putas!' and by the French Canadian's venom against 'dirty, cheating whores'. But in terms of understanding why such men sexually abuse children, it seems more important to note that this kind of fear could lead to a search for sexual partners who are perceived as too powerless to pose serious threat to their control.

Meanwhile, because having sex with children is transgressive, it represents a form of revenge against the authority figures who try to control them and a world that refuses to gaze indulgently upon them.

We feel, however, that explanations which focus on individual psychology can only partially explain the phenomenon of child sexual exploitation by sex tourists. Some abusers do clearly suffer from what might be readily classifiable as personality disorders - Charlie, Mark and the French Canadian retiree being the most obvious examples.

But others neither exhibit traits nor express attitudes that fall outside what would be generally accepted as 'normal' in North American and European society. Indeed, the only characteristics which interviewees to date have consistently had in common is their racism, their sexism and their adherence to a very specific set of beliefs about male sexuality, none of which could be said to distinguish them from the mass of their male compatriots.

SOME COMMON THEMES

Some common themes emerge from the profiles provided above, as well as from interviews with other sex tourists who were observed with under age prostitutes.

1. Male Sexuality as Biological 'Need'

All are men who believe themselves to be at the mercy of biologically determined sexual 'needs' or 'urges'. They therefore see women as having control over a 'resource' (their female bodies) which is vital to men's wellbeing. Western women, who are generally in a position to limit or deny them access to this vital resource, are therefore seen as powerful. Not all these men are equally angry about the imaginary power which women hold over them. There is a big difference between a man like Charlie and one like the Spanish widower in terms of how centrally preoccupied they are by the idea of this 'power', for example. Yet both these men feel it is unreasonable to expect them to resist any 'opportunity' to obtain access to this resource 'What was I supposed to do?' they both say. Because all of them buy into a model of male sexuality which is couched in terms of 'needing' rather than 'wanting', they can construct themselves as passive victims of 'nature' rather than as active agents, which in turn means that they do not see themselves as fully morally responsible for their actions.

2. 'Racialised' Others as Sexual Others

All are men who espouse a highly sexualised form of racism. Western thinking on 'race' stills owes much to the pseudo-science of nineteenth century anthropologists and natural scientists who elaborated the idea of a hierarchy of 'races' which was seen as somehow linked to an evolutionary process. Whites, needless to say, were the most highly evolved, whilst so called 'primitive' people were taken to exist 'in a state of nature'.

Without exception, the sex tourists we interviewed reproduced this classic racism in their (mis)understanding of Cuban culture as sexually 'open' and 'free'. Indeed, their racism has an extraordinary self-reinforcing quality, since it encourages them to interpret everything they see as 'evidence' of the truisms they already 'know'.

The fact that young couples sometimes have sex on beaches or in the sea is interpreted as an expression of urgent, primitive animalism rather than as a response to a chronic housing shortage and lack of privacy, for example, and the fact that girls who are unwashed and barefoot approach tourists to prostitute themselves is interpreted as a sign of their 'simplicity' and 'artlessness' (they have come 'straight from the jungle') rather than as a testament to their poverty and desperation.

The sex tourists' racism is gendered - it is Cuban women and girls in particular who are alleged to be so very 'natural' and 'physical' - but it also seems to us that this kind of sexualised-racism may serve to disinhibit sex tourists about adult-child sexual contact in two main ways. First, there are men like Charlie whose racism dehumanises children in the economically underdeveloped countries they visit. This allows such men to construct a fiction within which children want and consent to sexual relations with adult men: under-age Cuban girls are just as 'hot' for it as adult women; they grow up young; they're all 'at it' anyway; no 'civilised' inhibitions temper 'their' physical lusts, and so on.

Second, there are men whose racism naturalises adult-child sexual contact in the economically underdeveloped countries they visit. Since they believe that all men have a biologically programmed 'natural' urge to seek sex, there must be a sense in which Canadian and European sexual law and morality represent an attempt to restrain 'nature' and is thus 'unnatural'. (A sex tourist once told one of the authors that he had seen Desmond Morris talking on TV and had suddenly understood that 'I'm a walking sex machine' and that this explained his 'need' to go to Thailand.) What Jake an ageing hippie sex tourists like him do is to set up an opposition between the imaginary sexual freedom of the 'noble savage' in Cuba and the restrictive repressive codes and laws governing sexual expression in Canada.

The latter are viewed as an attempt to hold in check what is 'only natural', the former becomes something wholesome, good and 'natural', a palliative against the evils of modernity and materialism. And we all know the 'natural' things are good for children, or at least, that they do children no harm.

With the possible exception of the Spanish widower, the tourists profile above were preoccupied with issues of authority and control. They all railed against bad and corrupt authority figures and saw themselves as somehow above the law (this finds expression in the smuggling activities as well as in their sexual exploitation of under-age prostitutes). Again, this suggests that they view laws pertaining to sexual conduct as illegitimate, presumably believing that state has no right to invade their freedom to satisfy 'natural wants and appetites.

CONCLUSIONS

In terms of reducing the extent of child sexual exploitation by tourists in Cuba, there are some fairly straightforward short term steps that could be taken. The major sending countries are Canada, Italy and Spain. It seems that many of the men who sexually exploit children are frequent visitors to Cuba and it also appears that many of them fund their trips through smuggling. Simply by taking more active steps to police this illegal activity, customs officials in sending countries could help to reduce the ease with which such men satisfy their tastes.

It is also the case that many sex tourists are ignorant of the age of consent laws in Cuba and mistakenly believe that 'anything goes' in this 'sexual permissive' country. Publicising the actual law may help to deter some of them. However, so long as there is no extra-territorial law which allows for their prosecution back home and so long as the Cuban authorities continue to persecute and punish child prostitutes rather than their clients, it seems likely that men like Charlie and Mark will continue to feel secure about sexually exploiting children.

In the longer term, it may also be that we can learn something about sex tourists' propensity to sexually exploit children by turning the question on its head and asking questions about those men who do not use under-age prostitutes. In Cuba, we interviewed two men whom we believe had not sexually exploited and would not sexually exploit children. Both were Canadians in professional occupations and both were divorcees in their forties. One of these men had spent a month doing voluntary work in an agricultural collective and was spending two weeks in Varedero to relax before returning home, the other was an administrator in a psychiatric hospital on a three week vacation. The first had had a relationship with a Cuban woman, also in her forties, whilst working on the collective. In Varedero, he befriended two 13 year old prostitutes from Havana, buying them food and chatting with them in the bars where they solicited but did not have sex with them. The second struck up a friendship with Lola, with whom he danced, bought meals for and invited to use the shower in his hotel room but did not have sexual intercourse with her.

Both of these men were more knowledgeable and informed about the political and economic situation in Cuba than the average tourist and both appeared to be genuinely disturbed by the prevalence of child prostitution. They did not talk about Cuban women and girls as 'racialised' or sexual 'others', rather they would compare the situation of children in Varedero to that of children in Canada and they understood the difference to be a consequence of structural factors (economic, political and social) not nature.

'Opportunity' did not make a 'thief' of these men. Why? Clearly they did not regard the sexual availability of 13 and 14 year old girls as an 'opportunity', and this in turn implies that they do not buy into an ideology which insists that a 'real man' must have sexual intercourse with any female on offer, or into an ideology which dehumanises 'racialised' others.

So long as poverty is imposed on large numbers of people in economically underdeveloped countries, Western tourists will be provided with 'opportunities' to sexually exploit and abuse children.

As well as having a responsibility to take more active steps to police those who take advantage of this situation, it seems to us that Western governments have a moral responsibility to make some attempt to eradicate the kind of ideologies which teach their male citizens to view the misery and desperation of children like Anna-Bel as representing nothing more than an 'opportunity' to indulge their own sexual fantasies.

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Table 1 Background characteristics of sex tourists/ sexpatriates known to use under-age prostitutes/ pick up in bars used by under-age prostitutes.

ID	Nationality	Age	Marital Status	Occupation	Previous trips to Cuba	Previous trips to other sex tourist destinations	Type of accommodation in Cuba	Age of youngest Cuban girl he admits to or is known to have sexually exploited
				skilled	no	Thailand	hotel and	
	British	36	single	manual		Philippines	private rooms	18
1				self	yes	Malaysia	private rooms	15
2 Donald	British	37	single	employed manual		Philippines	rooms	
self								
3	Swedish-British	50	single	employed professional	yes	no	hotels	17
4	Canadian	62	married	professional self	yes	not known Venezuela	not known	15
	Canadian	30s	divorced	employed professional	yes	Thailand Philippines Kenya	apart-hotel	not known
5								
6	Canadian	30s	divorced	professional small	yes	not known Brazil	apart-hotel hotel and	not known
7 Johnny	British-Canadian	54	divorced					
twice	Business							
owner	yes	Thailand						
Venezuela	private							
rooms	15							
				self			hotel and	
8 Paul	Canadian	26	single	employed professional	yes	no	private rooms	17

				self		Dominican		
9 Charlie	Italian-	54	single	employed	yes	Republic	apart-hotel	12
	Canadian			non-manual				
				self		Peru,	apart-hotel	18
10 Nigel	Italian-	44	single	employed	yes	Venezuela		
	Canadian			non-manual				
				self employed		Venezuela,		
11 Jake	Canadian	48	single	professional	yes	Brazil,	hotel and	not known
						amaica	private rooms	
12 Mark	Canadian	40s	divorced	professional	yes	not known	private rooms	13
13 Bruce	British	46	single	professional	yes	not known	private rooms	not known
	Canadian							
14 John	Canadian	40s	divorced	not known	yes	not known	private rooms	13
						Thailand		
15 James	Canadian	48	single	professional	yes	Philippines,	private rooms	15
						Hawaii,		
						Mexico, Brazil		
16	Canadian	43	divorced	professional	yes	no	hotel	not known
						Dominican		
17	Canadian	53	single	professional	yes	Republic,	private rooms	not known
						Thailand,		
						Latin America		
18	I~I Canadian	'R'	divorced	self employed	no	no	hotel	16
				professional				
	Canadian	68	single	retired	yes	French	hotel	13
19				professional		Caribbean		
						Brazil, Domini-		
20	French	59	married	small business	yes	can Republic,	hotel	17
				owner		FrenchCaribbean		
21 Carlos	Spanish	28	single	professional	no	no	hotel	not known
22	Spanish	52	widower	professional	no	! no	hotel	15
23	Spanish	26	single	professional	yes	not known	hotel	16
24	Spanish	26	single	not known	yes	Dominican	hotel	15
						Republic		