

8-2002

# Prostitutes' Understanding of God

Gerardo Alberto Toledo

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Prostitutes' Understanding of God

By

Gerardo Alberto Toledo

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A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Clinical Ministry

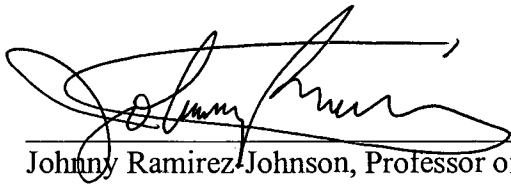
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August 2002

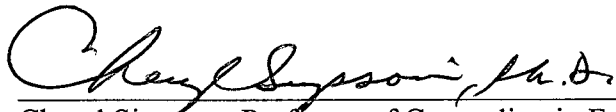
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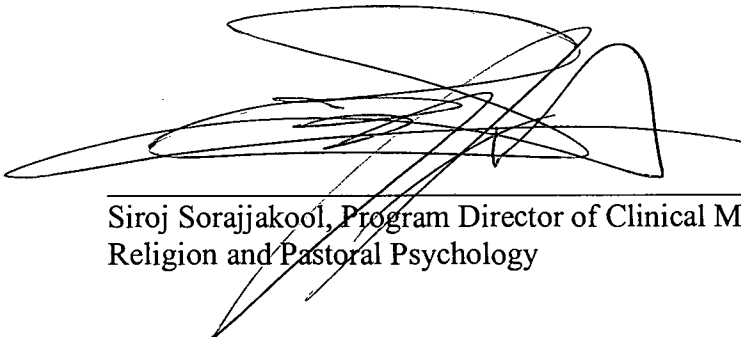
Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this thesis in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master in Clinical Ministry.



\_\_\_\_\_, Chairperson  
Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, Professor of Religion, Theology, Psychology, and Culture



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Cheryl Simpson, Professor of Counseling in Family Sciences



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Siroj Sorajjakool, Program Director of Clinical Ministry and Associate Professor of Religion and Pastoral Psychology

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the individuals who helped me to complete this study and the Master in Clinical Ministry.

To the Faculty of Religion, Loma Linda University, and especially to Dr. Gerald Winslow and Pastor Randy Roberts for granting me a tuition waiver that allowed me complete the Masters in Clinical Ministry.

Dr. Johnny Ramirez-Johnson thank, you for your constant support, guidance, patience, encouragement, and friendship. Thank you for being open to entering my world-view and for treating me as an equal as you guided me in completing this study.

Dr. Siroj Sorajjakool, thank you for sharing your experiences and knowledge on this field. And especially, thank you for your *unalterable* support and friendship, and for *Wu Wei*.

Dr. Cheryl Simpson, thank you for teaching me the value of fairness and for your constant interest and encouragement on this thesis.

Dr. Irvent Torres, thank you for your suggestions, encouragement, and for clarifying the expression of my ideas.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my dear friend Emma Child, for her generosity that made it possible for me to complete my degree, a Masters in Clinical Ministry. Emma, thank you for being an all terrain friend.

I also dedicate this work to Cecilia, Estela, Gladys, Ingrid, Isabel, Laura, Maria, Mariana, Marisol, Samantha, Stephanie, Tatiana, and Veronica. Thanks for sharing your lives' experiences with me, and for teaching me about a loving God I had never met before.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

### Prostitutes' Understanding of God

by

Gerardo Alberto Toledo

Masters of Arts, Graduate Program in Clinical Ministry  
Loma Linda University, August 2002

Dr. Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, Chairperson

This study describes the understanding of God by twelve prostitutes of the Street 24 de Mayo, Quito, Ecuador. This understanding is presented and analyzed from a psychological and theological perspective. A way to call the area of knowledge here described is phenomenology of religion. The interviews were conducted on December 15 through December 29, 2001. The thirteen interviewed sexual workers (one interview tape was damaged) belonged to the Asociacion Pro Defensa de la Mujer (Association Pro Defense of Women), which has four hundred and fifty members, all sexual workers. The recorded interviews were done at the office of the mentioned Association.

Bolwby's (1969, 1973, 1977, 1980) attachment theory and Rice's (1980, 1989, 2001; and Pinnock, Rice, Sanders, Hasker, Basinger, 1994) views on theodicy served as part of the theoretical framework for the study. A psychological perspective was followed when describing who God is; parallels were drawn between one's relationship with parents and one's relationship with God.

In this study it was found that sexual workers see God as their protector and provider, not as the one who is to be blamed for their having to work in the sex industry, neither the one to whom they go in order to receive help to find another job.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

God, Allah, Yahweh, Higher Power...Someone up there. These are some of the names used around the world to identify a Supreme Being. The Bible, the Koran, and the Torah are some of the writings these various groups use to learn about their God. From ancient times each culture and group of people have found a deity to worship, a God or an element that was very much present in their lives; i.e. fire, sun, and so on.

In the Christian world, we learn about God and His characteristics from the Bible. Differences in culture and gender affect the way God is perceived and the Bible is interpreted. An example of this could be the fact that some people have assigned the female gender to God, and thus refer to Him as She, while others find this offensive. Moreover, there are many theological discussions surrounding God and His relationship with people, between Catholics and Protestants, and even among different branches within these core religious groups.

In social sciences the study of who God is has been linked with psychological and sociological disciplines, which adds to the permanent theological dialogue about God's identity. In this project a combined approach was used to describe the findings of the interviews and to identify parallels from the fields of theology and psychology.

What is God like? Who is God? How does God relate to us? Perhaps, these and other questions could be answered by studying the Bible or using philosophical arguments. However, this study explored the perspective that prostitutes have of God. Their understandings of God will contribute to the continuing dialogue about who God is.

## **Research Question**

Psychological, sociological and religious literature show that prostitutes have been the object of many research studies which sought to describe, among other things, the causes and hazards of prostitution, the relationship between sexual work and the use of drugs, prostitutes' sexual practices, and expectations for their future life. Some articles also provide a biblical message in reference to prostitutes and their work, which mainly deal with the issue of God's acceptance and forgiveness towards prostitutes. Most of these articles relate the experience of at least one sexual worker to a spiritual message or thought.

What understanding of God do prostitutes have? Discovering the answer to this question is the purpose of this study. Therefore, rather than being a theological explanation of issues related to prostitutes and their work, the intention was to learn from their understanding and experiences what God is like. In other words, the purpose was to study the culture of prostitutes and how their experiences contribute to the understanding of who God is. This developed an experiential theology of who God is through the perspective of twelve prostitutes.

## **Scope and Limitations**

There are many related issues that could be explored in the study of prostitution such as sexuality, gender, and oppression. However, the objective of this study was to describe, through qualitative analysis, the participant sexual workers' understanding of and relationship with God. Because the interviewees' religious background is Roman Catholic, their understanding of God may differ from those of sexual workers in Protestant or Muslim countries. It was the sole intention of this study to describe the

interviewees' understanding of God, not to conduct a comparison with that of sexual workers from other religious or cultural backgrounds. When conducting experiential theology, the point of departure should be a singular one.

The interest of this study was to identify and describe what the sexual workers contribute to the understanding of God, their stories, and the values these narratives present. Because sexual work may have different effects on a person according to age, the study only included women who were 18 years of age and older, thus focusing on consenting adults.

### **Methodology**

This qualitative study interviewing consisted of twelve female prostitutes who were 18 years of age or older, from Quito, the capital city of Ecuador, particularly those working at the 24 de Mayo. The author received the corresponding authorization from the Internal Review Board of Loma Linda University, and appropriate informed consent procedures were followed.

A friend of the author, Emma Child, who works in the city of Quito facilitated the original contact with the Asociacion Pro Defensa de la Mujer (Association for the Defense of Women). This Association is composed of 450 volunteer members, all of them sexual workers. The activities and goals of this Association will be later discussed. The interviewed women for this project were called as they refer to themselves, not as prostitutes, but as sexual workers (in the literature review section the words prostitute and prostitution will still be used as they are mentioned in the cited articles).

The intention of writing this paper and the need for interviewing fifteen sexual workers was explained to the president and secretary of the Association. Ultimately it

was possible to interview thirteen of them, because on the last day two of the candidates did not show up for the interviews). A tape that included most of one of the interviews was lost. Therefore, the final number of interviews analyzed was twelve. It was agreed with the Association's leadership that US\$ 10 would be paid for each interview. The interviews were held in a room in the Association's building. Initially some of the sexual workers were a bit hesitant because it had not been explained to them what kind of questions they would be asked. Thereafter, all the interviewees were very open and answered all the questions.

The taped interviews were conducted on December 15-29, 2001. At the beginning of each interview, the informed consent was read and explained to the interviewees (See Appendix A). After they signed it, which was done using a pseudonym, a copy of the informed consent was given to them and another was kept for the author's records. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed and verbatim translated to English. Table 1 gives the summary of personal information of the interviewees.

This study, although primarily a descriptive account within phenomenology of religion, included theological, social, psychological, and cultural sources that help clarify the ideas of the interviewees.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study followed what is called "experiential theology." In analyzing the responses of the interviewees, psychological and theological aspects were taken into consideration. In reading the articles mentioned in the literature review section it was found that the issue of "prostitutes and God" was mentioned either directly by the prostitutes or by authors reflecting on how God and Christians relate to sexual workers.

The “compensation hypothesis” and “the open view of God,” both described in the literature review section, were used to facilitate the understanding of God described by the interviewed sexual workers. In this thesis God will be referred to as “He,” since this was the personal pronoun used by the interviewed sexual workers.

The interviewees’ narratives exposed the paramount importance of attachment, or lack of it, in their relationships with family, friends, and society as a whole. The attachment theory was found to be a useful tool to describe the psychological aspects of these types of interactions. At the same time, the literature showed a close relationship between attachment theory and religion. This relationship, described in the Literature Review, will help in understanding how attachment (or its counterpart, namely, abandonment and rejection) with other people may influence one’s concept of and relationship with God. Two main ideas were derived from this relationship. First, some people see God as they see their parents. Second, people who have been abandoned or rejected by their primary caregivers, look for a secure attachment figure, finding in God the response to their need.

The following chapters will present the social-cultural context in which the interviewed sexual workers grew up and lived. Furthermore, their experiences of attachment with family, society, Church, and themselves will be described and analyzed. In a *crescendo* mode it will be possible to get to know them more fully as persons. This information will help the reader to better understand the interviewees’ perspective of God and their relationship with Him.

## **Significance of the Study**

Through qualitative methodology and narrative analysis, this study was dedicated to the exploration of the views of female, adult sexual workers in a Latin American city, Quito, as pertaining to their views of God. A similar kind of study was not found in the literature.

References to sexual worker's view of God were scarcely found in the answers given by sexual workers in other studies, and such references were generally not longer than a couple of sentences. This study identified a much deeper content and explanation of a particular set of sexual workers' understanding of God and spirituality within a Western, Latin American city.

All readers will benefit in learning a perspective, a set of views that humanize a group that society demonizes. In so far as sexual workers can be understood as humans beings describing God, all readers can draw closer to humanity and to God.

## **Analysis**

There were two ways of gathering data for this study. Participants' answers were documented via the researcher's notes and audio recording of the interviews. The researcher's memos taken during the interviews and/or observations were the first line of analysis, guiding some of the clarification processes as the interviews were analyzed.

After the interviews were recorded, all were transcribed verbatim. The analysis of the transcribed interviews consisted of three steps: first, the interviews were read along with all the notes and observations. This gave the researcher an overview and scope of the data gathered. Second, categories were identified from all the data collected. These categories were then triangulated with other parts of the interview, with other interviews,



and with the research team's interpretations of the categories (see Table 2). Third, after all categories were identified, the models presented were developed. These models arose from the data. The conclusions drawn were gathered from the recorded and transcribed narratives.

Table 2 shows the Categories, Division, and Subdivision obtained from the analysis of the interviews, as well as the names of the interviewees whose quotations were used in each component of this table. Table 2 identifies the whole spectrum of experiences and relationships that were important in the lives of the interviewed sexual workers.

Chapter One presents the Literature Review, describing some of the issues related to prostitution. It also describes psychological and theological theories that will help in understanding the experiences of the interviewed sexual workers.

Chapter Two is dedicated to show the Ecuadorian culture from the point of view of two Ecuadorian writers.

Chapter Three presents the experiences of attachment and lack of it that the interviewed sexual workers had with their families.

Chapter Four shows the interaction sexual workers have with different sectors of society and how they interact among themselves.

Chapter Five analyzes the understanding of God that was perceived in the interviews done for the study.

Table 1

Personal Information of Interviewees

Name	Age	Religion	Place of Birth	Marital Status	Children	Caregiver During Childhood	Church Assistance	Interview Duration	Pages
Cecilia	36	Catholic	Milagro	Divorced twice	4	Uncles	Regularly	40'	10
Estela	40	Catholic	Guayaquil	Divorced twice	3	Mother	Regularly	42'	10
Gladys	43	Catholic	Esperanza	Divorced	4	Step parents	Regularly	39'	9
Ingrid	28	Catholic	Quevedo	Single Mother	1	Parents: good relationship	Regularly	39'	8
Isabel	33	Catholic	Guayaquil	Single mother with partner	1	Parents: good relationship	Irregular	43'	10
Laura	45	Catholic	Coast	Divorced twice	2	Parents: maternal physical abuse	Regularly	36'	7
Maria	48	Catholic	Oriente	Widowed	4	10 years religious school. 1 year with mother. Sexual abuse by brother	Regularly	49'	12
Mariana	35	Catholic	Coast	Single mother	2	Mother. Physical abuse	Regularly	36'	7
Marisol	27	Catholic	Coast	Divorced and remarried	2	Sent to work as maid at age 9 to another city	Regularly	35'	9
Samantha	28	Catholic	Coast	Single	None	Grand-mother	Irregular since becoming a sexual worker	29'	8
Stephanie	31	Catholic	Guayaquil	Single mother with partner	3	Father and step-mother	Regularly	10' (one tape lost)	2
Tatiana	29	Catholic background	Coast	Single mother	2	Parents	Irregular	32'	8
Veronica	27	?	Coast	Single mother	1	Father and step-mother who physically abused her	?	41'	10

**Table 2**  
**Categories from Interviews**

CATEGORIES	DIVISION	SUBDIVISION	INTERVIEWEES	PAGES	
FAMILY	PARENTS	Parental abandonment	Cecilia, Gladys, Maria, Marisol	2	
		Parental abuse	Maria, Mariana, Veronica	1	
		Consequences of abandonment and abuse	Maria	1	
		Consequences to the abandoner	Cecilia	1	
		Importance of parents	Gladys, Isabel, Laura, Mariana, Samantha	2	
		Parental favoritism	Maria	1	
		Equal distribution of goods	Cecilia, Gladys	1	
	MOTHER	MOTHER	Transferred parenthood	Cecilia, Veronica	1
			'Eamed' love	Cecilia	1
			Dialoguing differences	Cecilia	1
		Mother's love	Cecilia, Maria, Mariana, Veronica	2	
		Mother's role	Cecilia, Estela, Gladys, Laura, Maria,	4	
		Mother's indifference	Maria	1	
		FATHER	Father's love	Cecilia, Estela, Maria, Veronica	1
			Father's role	Cecilia, Estela, Laura, Veronica	2
			Husband's Role	Estela, Mariana, Samantha, Veronica	1
		CHILDREN	CHILDREN	Children's response to parents	Estela, Maria
Children's trust	Cecilia			1	
Resentment towards parents	Cecilia, Gladys		1		
SIBLINGS	Sibling's abuse		Maria	1	
	Resentment towards siblings		Maria, Mariana	1	
GOD		God's role	Cecilia, Estela, Gladys, Ingrid, Marisol,	4	
		Prostitutes' view of God	Isabel, Maria, Mariana, Marisol, Tatiana	2	
		God's concept of prostitutes	Estela, Gladys, Ingrid, Isabel, Laura, Mariana, Marisol, Tatiana	3	
		Forgiveness of prostitution	Cecilia, Gladys, Ingrid, Isabel, Samantha	2	
CHURCH		Experiences with religious people	Isabel, Maria	1	
		Experiences with religious differences	Estela, Marisol	1	
		Church fellowship experiences	Cecilia, Estela, Gladys, Ingrid, Isabel, Samantha	2	
PROSTITUTES-PROSTITUTION	NEEDS	Prostitutes' needs	Isabel, Mariana, Marisol, Samantha, Tatiana	3	
		Means for change	Maria	1	

### Cont. Categories from Interviews

CATEGORIES	DIVISION	SUBDIVISION	INTERVIEWEES	PAGES
		Education	Cecilia, Estela, Laura, Maria	2
		Concept of 'good person'	Estela, Laura, Maria, Mariana	2
	PROSTITUTION LIVE	Process to prostitution	Estela, Gladys, Ingrid, Isabel, Laura, Marisol, Samantha, Tatiana	2
		Secrecy of prostitution	Cecilia, Ingrid, Isabel, Laura, Maria, Tatiana, Veronica	2
		Prostitution acceptance	Cecilia, Estela, Gladys, Ingrid, Isabel, Maria, Mariana, Marisol, Samantha, Tatiana	6
		Work vs. personal life	Cecilia, Gladys, Isabel, Maria	1
		Harshness of prostitution	Ingrid, Samantha	1
<b>TOTAL # OF CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TOTAL # OF DIVISIONS</b>	<b>TOTAL # OF SUBDIVISIONS</b>	<b>TOTAL # OF PEOPLE QUOTED</b>	<b>TOTAL # OF PAGES</b>
Four	Seven	Thirty-seven	Twelve	Sixty-three

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Many things come to mind when we think of prostitutes and prostitution: sex, money, the prostitute, the client, and the pimp. But often people forget that prostitutes are women, someone's mother, sister, or daughter. Castillo, Gomez, and Delgado relate what two women say about women who have sex with more than one partner, "'woman' is defined not only in opposition to 'man' but also in contradistinction to that other gendered-being, the whore" (1999:396,397). Hence, even women seemingly forget that "whores" are no other than women, just like themselves.

#### **About Males, Females, and Sex**

The "Vagina Monologues" of American pop culture has for the first time introduced to the public through theater the concept of female sexuality as presented by females. The Vagina Monologues "a show made up entirely of women chatting about their most private part-is one of the biggest theater successes of the year," says Marc Peyser (2000:66). This controversial play seemed to have had a good and liberating reception for most women who have seen it, as they feel more open in talking about their bodies and sexuality (Peyser, 2000). Eve Ensler comments,

Vagina. Doesn't matter how many times you say it, it never sounds like a word you want to say...I really want to help stop violence toward women (Grossman, 2000).

Sexuality seems to be a taboo so strong that women do not feel comfortable to talk about their own bodies. This taboo, however, does not equally exist for men and women.

For many people women represent evil, but men and sex are good (Enright, 1993; Murphy, 1993; Wilcox, 1975). Furthermore, most stories telling, including the Bible,

have male perspectives (Anderson, 1993). This male perspective describes sexuality from a chauvinistic view, while women's sexuality is simply overlooked. In addition, it seems inappropriate for women to talk about erotic issues (Finger, 1993) or intimacy in a public place (Bohlmann, 1993).

In some cultures, such as the Mayan population of Guatemala, boys receive more information about sex than girls and if an unmarried girl gets pregnant, she will be the one to receive punishment, not the boy who impregnated her. We are taught that men are the ones to take the initiative in sexual encounters and not women. Only sexual workers would approach men sexually (Bertrand, Ward, and Pauc, 1991-1992).

Sex is seen as something that men need (Driver, 1993), or as something that, if done daily, would kill the man and not the woman, because her role is to receive (Bertrand, et al., 1991-1992). Some women think that if a woman has sex with different men only for pleasure, then she is a sexual worker. Often, non-prostitute women will have more compassion for sexual workers if the sexual workers suffer rather than enjoy their work (Castillo, et al., 1999). Sexual workers recognize that people believe the violence, including rape, they receive from the police is something they deserve (Dalla, 2000). Yet, sexual workers consider it their job to provide sexually to men what "straight" women do not give them (Weiner, 1996).

Lugibihl (1993) and Driver (1993) talk about the idea that, perhaps, every human being practices prostitution at a certain level. They put it this way,

We are all part of a world and a system that demands that we sell pieces of ourselves to survive. Some of us sell our bodies, some our time, some our souls. We are all trying to figure out how to survive without these pieces of ourselves (Lugibihl, 1993, p.3).

The 'fish bowl' [a room with glass walls where women wait for the clients to choose them] reminded me of the high school dances where groups of young women stood together, ostensibly absorbed in conversation, but painfully aware of male scrutiny. We did indeed value our friendships with each other, but we had stuffed our bras and shortened our skirts because we knew that no number of girl friends would truly validate us as females. We were not merchandising our bodies in quite the same way as the women in color-coded dresses. Still, the currency we had to attract male attention, and ultimately a mate, was whatever beauty we were born with or managed to simulate. And we knew without being told that a woman's economic security depended primarily on the man she was able to 'catch' (Driver, 1993, p.14).

Womanhood is thus attached to sexual submission and male dominance.

Recognizing that many women have sexual intercourse with their partners against their will, Driver goes on to say, "...many of us have traded our bodies to buy a little peace and avoid an argument (1993, p.14)." As normal males and females negotiate adolescence and adulthood, many find themselves using their bodies as currency for gaining a favor or partner for life.

The words prostitute and prostitution bring different images to mind and people generally react with an uneasy feeling to such words. This has been the personal experience of many. For this author, when referring to this research and the interviewing of female prostitutes, most people thought it was a joke.

This type of reaction is rather common. Literature confirms negative reactions when the term prostitution is mentioned. For some married women it is worse if their husbands visit a prostitute than if they have an affair with other women. Prostitutes are also seen as the only or main carriers of sexually transmitted diseases. To others, there is the belief that if their husbands visit prostitutes they will start drinking and beating their wives (Bertrand, et al., 1991-1992). In Brasil, police authorities justify the repression

against prostitutes on the grounds that they "disturb the peace" by "wearing tight skirts and displaying their breasts on a public thoroughfare" (Leite, 1990, p.296). In New York City, prostitutes are not only rejected by society as a whole, but many times they are not accepted in shelters for homeless even though they may not have a place to sleep (Weiner, 1996). Also, when prostitutes want to come back to normal life, they find it difficult, not only because many of them do not have a profession, education, or particular skill, but also because they are marked by the work they used to do, thus they are rejected by society (Weiner, 1996).

An illustrative story is told by a woman who spent over a year working as a missionary among prostitutes in Olongapo, Philippines. One day as she walked early in the morning on the streets where prostitutes were often seen, she heard a group of US Marines saying unkind words and propositioning her. She responded, "I'm not that kind of woman." As soon as she said that, she realized the enormous significance of those words, which have always stayed with her making her question her true motivations and concepts (Lugibihl, 1993, p.2).

### **Church and Prostitutes**

Some people recognize that in their own churches the topic of prostitution was never discussed or was condemned (Benton, 1985; Swing, 1998; Wilcox, 1975). Some prostitutes said that the church has a different attitude towards them than the one Jesus had. Jesus accepted everybody (Wilcox, 1975). He even provided encouraging words for Mary Magdalene, a prostitute (Bohlmann, 1993). Some prostitutes see the criticism of church-goers' a way of helping the Church member to feel better than others (Redmond, 1993) or to assert their self-righteousness (Swing, 1988). According to these and other



comments, it would seem that, on average, Christian Churches and their members are not providers of comfort or sources of help for prostitutes, rather as a place and a people where one would likely be criticized and condemned.

### **Prostitution: Its Causes**

It is well documented that most women enter into prostitution for two primary reasons: poverty (Castillo, et al., 1999; Chattopadhyay, Bandyopadhyay, and Duttagupta, 1994; Dalla, 2000; Driver, 1993; Erickson, Butters, McGilicuddy, and Hallgren, 2000; ; Hendrickson, 1993; Montgomery-Fate, 1993; Redmond, 1993; Romero-Daza, Weeks, and Singer, 1998-1999; Wilcox, 1975; Young, Boyd, and Hubbel, 2000) and to support a drug addiction (Brown, 1993; Dalla, 2000; Erickson, et al., 2000; Romero-Daza, et al., 1998-1999; Van Gelder, and Kaplan, 1992; Weiner, 1996).

Particularly in developing countries, poverty is a key reason for women to enter prostitution. Because of parents' lack of financial resources, most third world prostitutes do not have education. It has been documented that over fifty percent of prostitutes do not have formal education (Weiner, 1996; Young, et al., 2000); and the vast majority suffered child abuse, especially sexual abuse (Castillo, et al., 1999; Chattopadhyay, et al., 1994; Harby, 1993; McCaghy, & Hou, 1994; Newton-Rudy, & Handersman, 1986; Wilcox, 1975). Many of them had to start working at an early age. This makes them vulnerable to abuse in the workplace. As they grow older, the lack of education prevents them from finding more promising jobs.

There is a close relationship between prostitution and the use of drugs. Some prostitutes say, according to the authors mentioned below, that they were addicted when they were teenagers and that they got involved in prostitution as a way of supporting that

habit. To others, drugs are a way of decreasing their sense of guilt and sexual distress. Whatever the reason may be for their use of drugs, the result is the same. They find themselves in a vicious cycle that is very difficult to break, especially for those addicted to crack cocaine (Castillo, et al., 1999; Harby, 1993; Romero-Daza, et al., 1998-1999; Young, et al., 2000).

### **The Hazards of Prostitution**

Even though many prostitutes say that they do enjoy their sexual encounters with their clients, they also report those commercial encounters as being less satisfying than the ones with their husbands or lovers (Savitz, & Rosen, 1988). Their enjoyment comes mainly from the clients who treat them with kindness (Castillo, et al., 1999). By far, the negative consequences of prostitution outnumber this so-called positive side, namely, the enjoyment of their sexual encounters with clients. Violence from the police, clients, and pimps are among the greatest problems prostitutes face (Dalla, 2000; Erickson, et al., 2000; Gibson-Ainyette, Temper, Brown, & Veaco, 1988; Harby, 1993; Leite, 1990; Romero-Daza, et al., 1998-1999). Even though they take precautions, they know they are constantly at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including Human Immune-Deficiency Virus (Dalla, 2000; Romero-Daza, et al., 1998-1999).

It has been documented that prostitutes suffer more social distance, isolation, and emotional blockage (Dalla, 2000; Romero-Daza, et al., 1998-1999; Van Gelder, et al., 1992). They also suffer a higher incidence of depression, anxiety, and paranoid ideation than non-prostitutes (Gibson-Ainyette, et al., 1988; Young, et al., 2000). In one study, 68% of the prostitutes interviewed met the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (Farley and Barkan, 1998).

When some of their relatives learn about their involvement in prostitution, many times they are not accepted back (Driver, 1993). Many prostitutes have children, and they recognize their biggest fear is that their children will be taken away from them by governmental social services agencies that protect the welfare of children (Dalla, 2000; Weiner, 1996). This fear of losing the children they love illustrates the conflicts they suffer; values are at odds with practice.

### **Prostitutes' Values and Expectations**

According to Castillo et al. (1999) prostitutes, especially those who are mothers, make a very clear distinction between their professional and private lives. They feel proud of the fact that they are good mothers, and that they sacrifice themselves in order to sustain their children. Many times, as prostitutes tell their daily life stories, they use second or third person pronouns when talking about the activities related to their work. But they use the first person when talking about their private lives. This could indicate the separation they have in their minds between these two aspects of their lives. The words of one of the prostitutes interviewed by Castillo illustrates this point:

All kinds go there, and so many that you have to put up with an old drunk who's falling all over himself and tells you things and you have to put up with it because you're there. You aren't going to slap his face, oh no, how would that look? Everyone throw you out. You put up with it and you just move from that spot...you are getting out of there, you think, to breathe fresh air. That is what I'm telling you. I arrive home and I wish...but I arrive so tired, in such a bad mood, sometimes disgusted. I sleep, I rest, and on my day off the first thing I do is get up, I take a shower, and I go for a walk in the park (Castillo et al. 1999:409).

Literature also suggests that prostitutes do hold very strong moral values, although they may differ from those of society in general. For example, some of the prostitutes will not have sex in front of a church or allow their clients to touch their bodies as they

perform oral sex (Castillo, et al., 1999; Harby, 1993). They also talk about good and bad money. The former is spent to provide for their families and the latter is used for alcohol or drugs (Castillo et.al., 1999). Prostitutes, just as a family or any other group of society, have a set of values that guide their activities and allow them to keep their dignity in spite of their job.

Prostitutes have dreams and expectations just like others. They would like to be loved (Lugibirp, 1993), provide for their children, form a family, have a normal life and work, and have access to drug and alcohol therapy and medical services (Dalla, 2000). They need counseling and training for themselves and their children (Montgomery-Fate, 1993), as well as food, clothes, and shelter (Werner, 1996). Perhaps the isolation and many difficult experiences are caused by people's attitudes towards them.

### **Understanding Attachment**

The issues of attachment for prostitutes begin with their paternal and maternal relations. Attitudes that begin at home and affect all aspects of their lives and all relationships they have. Relationships and attachment with significant others are scarce for prostitutes.

In order to better understand the impact of maternal and/or paternal abandonment on a sexual worker's emotional life, the theories of Bowlby regarding attachment between primary care givers and infants and how this affects the emotional well-being of adults were examined.

Within the context of American middle class values Bowlby (1969) developed his ideas about attachment theory. In his book entitled *Attachment and Loss* (1969) Bowlby explained the notion that human attachment has a great influence on human emotional

development. For Bowlby, a secure attachment was as important as nourishment and procreation.

Bowlby presented his views on the type of childhood experiences that led to adult psychological disorders. He considered as very important aspects of early childhood issues such as prolonged separations from the mother and the mother's emotional attitude towards the child. Her attitudes included how she would feed, wean, toilet train, and perform other aspects of maternal care. Some mothers demonstrated an unconscious hostility towards the child, which showed up in small signs of dislike accompanied by an overprotective attitude designed to compensate for the hostility (Dutton, 1998).

According to Simpson & Rhodes (1998) as they responded to Bowlby's attachment theory, there are two questions that children need answered as they relate to their caregivers. First: Am I a worthy and lovable person? Second: Are others (the attachment figures) trustworthy and caring? If caregivers respond appropriately to the infant's needs for comfort, security and independent exploration, the infant is more likely to develop a model of self as valued and self-sufficient (positive). If, on the contrary, the caregiver consistently rejects the child's overtures for protection and comfort, and also interferes with her desire for independent exploration, the infant is more likely to develop a model of self as worthless and incompetent (negative), and the view of mother and of others as unreliable and rejecting (negative) (Simpson et al., 1998).

Bowlby defines attachment as a bond developed with "some other differentiated and preferred individual who is conceived as stronger and/or wiser" (Bowlby, 1977, p. 203). Threats to break that secure attachment will produce emotional responses that are extremely strong, such as terror, grief, and rage (Dutton, 1998).

## **Is Attachment an Option?**

Rather than an option, it would seem that attachment is a need, one so strong, that people would go to extremes in order to remain attached. Although the infant mainly attaches to the caregiver figure, as the infant grows that need for attachment will extend to other figures, such as relatives, siblings, extended family, close friends, public figures of influence, and others.

Female sexual workers who participated in this study gave many signs of how their attachment figures affected them. Their attachment figures affected their views of life's experiences. The next chapter will help contextualize the experiences of the interviewed sexual workers.

## **Attachment and Religion**

Many Christians refer to God using a paternal name: Father. Does this mean that people relate to Him as they do to their earthly fathers? Is there any relationship between how people see their fathers (parents) and the concept they have of God?

In the literature, which will be mentioned below, at least two different positions were identified. These two positions can help the reader to understand the trust and dependence of the sexual workers on God.

The first position mentioned the fact that, from the time of Aristotle, it has been observed that many people use the same words to describe their God's personality as the one they use to describe the personality of their father (Day, 1975). For example, a fifty-seven year old Caucasian female said,

When I hear you say that God loves me, I have a hard time trying not to remember Daddy raping me and saying, 'I love you, I love you, I love you all', all the time he was doing it to me...even after all these years, every

time I hear the word God, I see Daddy's face (Justice & Lambert. 1986, p.166).

Justice and Lambert (1986) conducted a study to find out the current perception of God that adult people have and the perceptions of the personality characteristics of their parents that they had in their childhood. They also examined the level of Christian devotion. Their findings show a correlation among the perceived childhood and youth images of the personalities of the natural father, and the respondent's current image of God. There is no relationship between the number of years of religious instruction and the image of God or the source of religious instruction. It was also found that a higher, more positive image of God positively correlates with a higher level of Christian devotion. In the same study it was found that a person who has been sexually abused as a child would be expected to have a low image of God in adulthood. In addition, those who had the lowest image of their parents reported the lowest image of God. Citing Tamayo & Desjardins (1976), Justice and Lambert (1986) reports that God's image is patterned after both father and mother.

Heller (1986) arrived at similar conclusions after interviewing children and collecting drawings and letters to God. She reports that as children move from early to middle childhood, they shift from perceiving God as a close, personal friend to seeing Him as a distant and powerful authoritative figure. She also suggested that this could be the result of children's awareness of their distancing from their parents. Gender also affected children's views of God. Boys seem to see Him as distant, but active, omniscient and rational; He was an organizer of projects and in control through indirect contact. On the other hand, girls perceived God as closer, more personal and passive.

## Compensation Hypothesis

The second position uses attachment theory with religion and our perception of God. How are attachment theory and religion put together? “The idea of God is the idea of an absolutely adequate attachment-figure...God is thought of as a protective parent who is always reliable and always available to its children when they are in need.” (Kaufmann, as cited in Kirkpatrick, & Shaver, 1990, p. 318)

Kirkpatrick & Shaver (1990) developed the concept of the compensation hypothesis, which proposes that certain aspects of religion, and particularly the belief in a loving, personal, available God, serve as a substitute for the secure attachment relations that people never had with their parents or with other primary caregiver.

Kirkpatrick and Shaver (1990) comment that although the evidence depicting religion as a haven of safety and comfort seems persuasive, it is perhaps the ‘secure base’ aspect of attachment that is particularly interesting with respect to religion. Bowlby emphasized repeatedly that the perceived availability of a responsive attachment figure is an antidote to fear and anxiety: “Whether a child or adult is in a state of security, anxiety, or distress is determined in large part by the accessibility and responsiveness of his principal attachment figure” (1973, p.23). Many Christians use figures of God that reflect attachment, such as: God or Jesus is by one’s side, holding one’s hand, or holding one in His arms (Kirkpatrick et al. 1990, p.319).

Kirkpatrick’s and Shaver’s study (1990) had for its goal to retrospectively assess the respondent’s childhood attachment relationships with parents, as well as a variety of measures of adult religious belief and involvement. They identified three attachment groups (avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, and secure). Of all the respondents, those reporting



*avoidant attachments* were clearly the most religious, and particularly the most conservatively religious. This group had the highest means on the loving God scale, attendance of services, being a Christian, belief in a personal God, and reporting a personal relationship with God. The *anxious/ambivalent* groups reported similar results. Among respondents who converted during their teen years, several described family problems and poor relationships with parents.

In every account of conversion, at least one of the following factors leading to the conversion would be present: problems with love relationships, problems in relationships with parents, severe emotional distress caused by different circumstances. From the perspective of attachment theory, these recurrent themes of lost or disrupted love relationships, family problems, and severe emotional distress represent the very sorts of circumstances in which people are likely to seek the safe haven provided by an attachment figure, in this case, God. That is shown in the fact that in time of severe distress, respondents with insecure attachment histories reported the experience of religious conversions at a high rate, regardless of parental religiousness. Also, when the mother's religiousness was low, respondents with *insecure (avoidant)* parental attachment were associated with high levels of adult religiousness, and *secure attachment* with lower levels.

Another study done by Eshleman, Dickie, Merasco, Shepard, and Johnson (1999) had similar results. They found that father's qualitative time, mother's qualitative time, father's parental identity, and mother's parental identity all correlate positively with God's distance: when parents were less involved in the child's life, God was perceived as closer. Children also indicated a closer, more involved God in situations requiring

nurturing, situations in which an attachment figure is desired. Also, when parents are less involved and when children desire a nurturing figure, God is perceived as closer. This is especially true for girls.

According to Gilkes (1989), African American Christians have heard the statements that suggest that God is a “mother to the motherless, and a father to the fatherless” (Gilkes. 1989, p.57) This thought brought comfort to African-Americans in whatever situation of powerlessness and abandonment they found themselves involved. Can prostitutes also experience the same? How open is God to prostitutes’ needs? This “open” God has been presented by Richard Rice (1980, 2001).

### **The Open View of God**

The “Open view of God” (Rice, 1980; 2001) suggests that He is in constant interaction with the world. Not only does He influence the world but also is influenced by it. Because love is one of the attributes of God’s character, He is sensitive to what happens to people. This kind of God was described by some of the interviewees who said that they think of Him all the time, even when they work. They defined prayer as sharing everything with Him. The issues they prayed for varied from finding something that they had lost to requesting help in dealing with a tooth infection.

According to Rice, God created men and women and gave them freedom of action. This freedom allows them not only to decide whether to accept Him or reject Him, but also permits each person to affect and be affected by others’ choices. Thus, God is not responsible for the evil experienced, but a co-sufferer with those who have to endure it. This concept seems to hold true as one reads the interviews that describe an “unrelated God” presented in this study. Sexual workers did not see God as the one

responsible for their having to work in prostitution. The causes for having to do so were poverty, lack of education, or having no other source of income.

The open view of God also describes Him in relation with time. God experiences the events as they happen and adapts His response to them. Such was the experience of one of the sexual workers who felt free to ask God to send her clients when she did not have any. (For a more complete description of “The openness of God,” see: Boyd, 2001; Pinnock, 2000; Rice, 1980, 2001; Sanders, 1998. To read about opponents to this approach, see: George, 1995; Kelly, 1995; McGrath; Olson, 1995; Richard Rice, 2001.)

The next chapter will provide a broad background regarding the Ecuadorian culture and will help contextualize the experience of the interviewed sexual workers and what was learned about attachment theory in adults, their view of God, and what type of God sexual workers conceive.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ECUADOR: A LOOK AT ITS CULTURE

A general knowledge of the Ecuadorian culture will be based on two Ecuadorean writers: Miguel Donoso Pareja (2000), *Ecuador: identidad o esquizofrenia (Ecuador: identity or esquizofrenia)* and Jorge Enrique Adoum (2000), *Ecuador: señas particulares (Ecuador: particular signs)*. In both books, there is an issue that takes paramount importance: Ecuador is a divided country. Authors Pareja (2000) and Adoum (2000) refer to the fact that there is a division between the people of the coast and the mountain: Guayaquil and Quito. There is an historical antecedent for this. The Province of Guayaquil became independent from the Spaniards before Ecuador became a country in 1822, and was free to decide whether to join Peru or Colombia. It finally became part of Ecuador, but still today there is a notable “aggression” between both populations, expressed in many disqualifying adjectives that both apply to each other. On the one hand, people from Guayaquil-the coast- are accused of being superfluous, impulsive, violent, without ideas, cruel, and proud. On the other hand, people from Quito –the mountain- are described as hypocrites, gossiping, stingy, and traitors (Pareja, 2000).

Pareja (2000:12) cites Julio Estrada Ycaza (1977) saying,

Casi podriamos decir que preferimos una patria diminuta, fracturada en mil pedazos, aunque ya cuando llegamos al borde del precipicio nos arrepentimos. Mientras el abismo nos parezca alejado continuaremos, sin embargo, ensayando, tratando de determinar hasta que punto podemos provocarnos serranos y costenos sin llegar al rompimiento final [we could almost say that we prefer a divided country, fractured in thousands of pieces, although when we come close to the precipice we regret it. As long as the precipice seems distant, we will continue trying to determine up to what extent can we provoke each other (people from the coast and the mountain) without getting to a final break up].

According to Pareja (2000), this kind of division is perceived when one lives in the country. Ecuadorians living abroad become very proud defenders of their unified nation. When an Ecuadorian succeeds, for example in a sport or literature, all the country celebrates without taking into account whether the person is from the coast or the mountains.

When the time comes for presidential elections, it is also noticeable that most candidates will have a person from the other side of the country as a partner for their presidential formula, thus attracting voters from both regions (Pareja, 2000).

Another factor that influences the division perceived in Ecuador is the presence of different races: white, black, mestizos, and indigenous. The black community is the one that is most rejected, one of whom Ecuadorians are the least proud. The indigenous culture is also resisted by some Ecuadorians, although words of their language, the *quichua*, are part of the daily conversations. In the new Constitution of the Republic three basic principles of the indigenous cultures have been incorporated: *ama llulla* (do not steal), *ama shua* (do not lie), and *ama quilla* (do not be lazy). Nevertheless, it would seem that most people would prefer to be white, and many would like to erase any influence from either indigenous and/or black heritage (Pareja, 2000). As referred by Adoum (2000) mentions the Informe Investigacion Qualitativa [Report of Qualitative Investigation] conducted by the Municipio del Distrito Metropolitano de Quito of April 1997, in which six groups were surveyed: male and female young adults, male and female adults, professionals and children of the middle upper class in the southern part of Quito. Everybody recognized being mestizo, but the majority considered themselves and their families as whiter than the other people in Quito. Nobody affirmed being a racist but

said that their parents are or were. White skin is considered prettier than the indigenous darker tones. At the same time, natives are perceived as being more courageous, honest, and hard workers; even more than whites are understood to be. Most of the adults who traveled abroad reported to have suffered some form of discrimination either in the United States or in Europe. Interestingly, it would seem that what hurts them most is to be physically unattractive because beauty is defined as white (Adoum, 2000).

Perhaps this lack of identity is also demonstrated in the parts of the culture such as music. In Latin America most countries are known for a particular rhythm: tango in Argentina, samba in Brasil, and so on, but Ecuador lacks a musical rhythm that could characterize it.

According to Pareja (2000) and Adoum (2000), it would seem the event that brings immediate unity in the country is war. In 1941 and 1995 Ecuador was involved in a war with Peru, and in both occasions there was a unified response of the people. Pareja (2000, p.76) comments that the response the country had against Peru shows an

Identity marked by three basic purposes: to defend what is our own, do not attack, and to seek peace (“una identidad marcada por tres propositos basicos: defender lo propio, no agredir y buscar la paz).

Ecuadorians are people who seek to have a good relationship with other countries. Even more, they are very much influenced by foreign ideas and lifestyles. This can be seen in the food that is been consumed: American hot dogs, Venezuelan arepas, Argentinean parrillas, Mexican tacos, and so on. The music and dances that are more common come from other countries (Ecuador does not have any major characteristic dance style). Adoum (2000) suggests that there would be no problem in accepting and incorporating positives aspects of other cultures. Nevertheless, it would seem, according

to Adoum (2000), that most Ecuadorians have an inferiority complex and a feeling of almost embarrassment regarding their own culture. Adoum (2000) mentions a national survey conducted by Defensa de los Niños Internacional in which it was found that 44% of the children and teenagers were happy to be Ecuadorians: 15% wish to have been born in the United States, 9,4% in other country of South America, 7,5% in Europe, and 6,9 % in other of the Andinean countries. In other words, 55,4% of Ecuadorian children would have liked to be born in other country (Adoum, 2000).

It has already been noted that *quichua* words are part of the daily vocabulary. It is also noticeable that the use of the diminutive, which would correspond to feelings of tenderness. For example, one could talk about a “gallinita” (little chicken), when in reality the chicken is not small in size. For Adoum (2000) the exaggerated use of the diminutive becomes an irritant, not because its use is incorrect but because it denotes submission, humiliation, supplication, and shyness. It would seem that to speak without using the diminutive form was an insolence, as if the interlocutor were always someone in a higher position: “quiere un vasito de aguita”(would you like a little glass of little water) Adoum, (2000, p.210).

The use of the diminutive form is not only heard in conversations, but also present in written articles. Even when referring to God, Ecuadorians seem to be more comfortable using the diminutive. In an article of the newspaper *El Comercio*, “Testimonio: ‘No quiero ser cantante...’ (9/25/01) it is told the story of a boy who makes money singing in the trolleys of the city. He says,

Le pido a Diosito y al Niño Divino que me de suerte para hacerme plata y darle a mi mama’ (I ask Little God and the Divine Child to give me luck to get money to give to my mom).

In another article of the same newspaper, “Testamento del Viejo” (11/08/01), the diminutive form of God is again used in a commentary about the Ecuadorian soccer team’s participation in the World Cup 2002,

Y que nos pasaria, Diosito, si vamos a octavos de final? (And what would happen to us, Little God, if we reach the play-offs?).

In this instance, the use of the diminutive would seem to include a supplication to God, as if trying to convince God to help the soccer team. This would confirm Adoum’s observation that the use of a diminutive denotes submission, humiliation, supplication, and shyness. When referring to God they seemingly submit as inferior agents before an almighty being.

Ecuador is described as having a *machista* society. Adoum (2000) describes “macho” as the man who is not charming, neither a fortunate lover, nor a stud, but one that screams because the shouting substitutes his ideas, or lack of them. He sustains pain, punishes any offense, rejects solidarity or help because he can deal with everything by himself. The “macho” affirms his self-esteem and courage, and demonstrates who is in control by acting with brutality against others, especially women. As referred by Adoum (2000) between April of 1994 and October 1996 there were over 23,000 reports of aggressions against women: 87% were physical and psychological abuse, and over 3% sexual abuse. He also mentions that according to the Centro de Investigacion de la Mujer Ecuatoriana (Center of Investigation for the Ecuadorian Woman) 73% of the women are physically abused by their spouses or partners, 37% of them are beaten up at least once a month, and sometimes daily. Twelve percent of these women say to have been beaten up without any reason; 54% said they have seen physical violence in their own homes where they grew up; 78% were beaten in their childhood, and 17% fled away from their homes



because of the violence (Adoum, 2000). According to Julia Torres, Secretary of the Comisaria de la Mujer de Tulcan, the principal causes of family violence are: lack of economic resources, the *machismo*, and excessive use of alcohol (*El Comercio*, 3/11/02). Machismo, therefore, does not only characterize men's behavior but makes women's lives markedly more difficult.

For the "macho" and for the majority of people in Ecuador, the archetype woman would have the following characteristics: she should be decente (sexually conservative), sumisa (without reaction against something imposed on her), sufrida (willing to accept her lot whatever it might be), and also a good mother, wife or daughter. It can be seen that women are not defined as individuals, but in relation to men (Adoum 2000). Rosa M. Gil and Carmen Inoa Vazquez (1996) present the concept of *Marianismo*. Many men would like, and many women have accepted, the role Marianismo presents for women: self-sacrifice, chastity, living in the shadows of men, family and kids. Following this role gives women, some think, a level of protection as a wife and mother, a certain amount of power, respect, and a life free from loneliness and want. Marianismo insists that women live in a world which no longer exists and which perpetuates a value system that makes perfection a synonym of submission. Though veneration may be the reward for such a 'nice woman,' she usually ends up feeling more like a servant than a subject for adoration. This 'ideal' profile of women seems to characterize the view of many in Ecuador. Machismo and Marianismo are two sides of a model of abuse and false pretense. Ecuadorian males and females are not alone in participating on this model.

Lack of trust in politicians seems to also characterize Ecuadorians. Adoum (2000, p.166) comments that as soon as people know of the adjudication of a bidding, or the

establishment of a new company, or the liberation of a prisoner, inevitably people would think of the politician in charge: “how much has he received?” In 1998 the *Indice de Percepciones de la Corrupcion* (Index of Perceptions of Corruption) placed Ecuador as the ninth most corrupted country in the world. Corruption in the political realm seems to have become so accepted among Ecuadorians, that it is not strange to hear people saying about the president or any other person in a position of power: “he can steal as long as he also does something good” (Adoum, 2000, p.165).

Ecuadorians are described, by Adoum (2000) as negative people, meaning pessimistic. People see themselves as having bad luck, and if things are going well in their lives, they expect a sudden change of fortune. It is common to hear people say, “*Como me he reido. Que me ira a suceder?*” (I have laughed a lot. What will happen to me now?). People also see other people as responsible for their situation, whether it be the country, a politician, or anyone but themselves. As a popular song says, “*por tu culpa y por mi mala suerte* ( it was your fault and my bad luck)” (Adoum, 2000:256). For Adoum, the need to find a responsible person or an excuse for a certain situation is comparable to what early Christians referred to as the “ ‘will of God’ before the Church began to talk about the ‘free will’ in order to explain issues that were outside the realm of His will” (Adoum, 2000, p. 256,257).

Adoum (2000, p.260) suggests, when talking about the pessimist attitude and passive resignation of the people, that these were transmitted from the Church to the indigenous people of Ecuador, then to everybody else, which helped to stop their rebellion against the Spaniards. This has become in something like the “natural state” of Ecuadorians, as a penitence for guilt. Adoum also sees Church as a place “*adusto*” [grim]

and closed (2000, p.242). Only when the celebrations, such as Viernes Santo (Good Friday), Dia de los Muertos [All Saints Day] and so on, come outside the Church, do they become popular festivities.

The comments of both Pareja (2000) and Adoum (2000) reflect a rather negative attitude toward the Church, and a superficial adherence to religious practices. What about God?

Aquellos a quienes no les toco el envidiable billete verde con el retrato de Franklin, deben haberse preguntado por que, una vez mas, Dios, en su infinita bondad y misericordia, decidio que siguieran siendo pobres si siquiera ese alivio electoral (those who did not get the enviable bill with Franklin's portrait, must have asked why, once again, God, in his infinite kindness and mercy, decided that they should continue to be poor without even that electoral relief)" (Adoum, 2000, p.107).

Does this sarcastic comment about God represent Ecuadorian's attitude or the author's own beliefs?

Pareja (2000), on the other hand, seems to perceive God's role as not decisive in relation with the reality of the country. Rather, it will be people's attitudes and actions that would determine their reality. He says,

Somos un pueblo bueno...(y) no somos proclives a la crueldad?...nos identificamos con el bien y la solidaridad? Si y no. O si, pero no. No por decreto del de arriba (tampoco somos malos por decreto del de abajo (...are we good people and not prone to cruelty?...do we identify ourselves with the good and solidarity? Yes and no. Or yes, but no. No because of a decree from the one up there (neither are we bad from a decree from the one below) (2000, p.91).

Pareja (2000) ends his book suggesting the topics that must be confronted by Ecuador as a nation,

Autonomias si, desmembramiento no, descentralizacion si, centralismo no; regionalismo (en el sentido de amar a su region) si, regionalismo patologico no; identidad si, esquizofrenia no" (autonomies yes,

dismemberment no, decentralization yes, centralism no; regionalism [meaning to love one's region] yes, pathological regionalism no; identity yes, schizophrenia no) (Pareja, 2000, p.251).

The destiny and reality of the nation is in the hands of the people and their choices. Their own choices make the difference rather than the influence of God or the devil.

When thinking of this study population, female sexual workers of 24 de Mayo street, Quito, Ecuador, at least three things need to be remembered. First, Ecuadorian culture seems to value more outside influences and many Ecuadorians wish they were from elsewhere. Second, Ecuadorian culture perceives the world from a subordinate position. This is best manifested in their constant use of the diminutive in conversations and writing. Third, Ecuadorian culture values the macho figure where men are seemingly detached, while women are overly attached to others. Machismo and Marianismo are stereotypes of men and women in the Ecuadorian culture and seem to define how Ecuadorians men and women relate to each other. The following chapter will examine the wider context of psychological attachment as the findings of the study are presented.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ATTACHMENT AND THE FAMILY

#### **Sock Inside Out**

Some excerpts from the interviews will be transcribed along with the theoretical concepts that are being described in order to show any correlation, or lack of it, between theory and the reality of human experiences of Ecuadorian sexual workers.

In analyzing the interviews with the sexual workers, the figure of attachment will be presented in a reverse mode. It will be as if we were looking at a sock from the inside out. In the experiences of these women the pain they deal with was revealed by the rejection and abandonment they suffered from their parents, families, and society as a whole. Cecilia expressed the most elementary of these fears, "my children don't know I have this 'life'...I think that if I tell them about it, they will not like it." In Cecilia's words, the underlying fear of other people knowing about her job is expressed. But how could she succeed in hiding who she is? The possibility of rejection is what produces such a fear. Laura's experience would seem to confirm this:

(Question: have you thought of telling (to your family about your work?)

No, no, I haven't thought about telling them...I think they'll react negatively, because it's like everything.

(Question: what do you mean by 'react negatively'?)

I mean that they will reject me, criticize me...I didn't have any experience (with rejection), but I have those ideas because I see other (sexual workers) and how their families reject them, their children...

The experience of others, even if not personally experienced, causes the fear of rejection to be present.

The need for attachment is so important for human beings that some are willing to do almost anything in order to remain attached to others. Instead of revealing their

lifestyle to their families in order to request help in finding another job, many sexual workers prefer to deal with the difficulties of their profession by themselves, rather than to risk being rejected by their families.

In the same line of thinking, Isabel's story shows that remaining attached to others is not a given in a sexual worker's life. She comments,

(Question: ...What's the worst part of being a sexual worker...?)

The worst part is the discrimination, that we have to lead a 'double' life, hid what we do, that 'double' life, that's what is the worst...

(Question: is it because of the discrimination that you don't tell your friends what you do, for fear, or is it another process?)

I think that sometimes it's because of fear, the embarrassment of being rejected...I have some friends (women) that say, 'look at those women (prostitutes) in the TV, what a shame'...then, suppose I say, 'look, I'm a sexual worker', what a shame, what will they tell me? (smiles).

(Question: when you are with you friends, and there are (prostitutes) in the TV, and they comment (negatively) about them, what do you feel inside?)

And... it maddens me to hear those comments...there are women (among my friends) that are unfaithful to their husbands...they don't realize what they are doing...they justify it saying that it's for love that they have relationships outside the home...but they criticize a 'paid' relationship. That maddens me, because they do the same I do, with the difference that I get money..."

For Isabel, to remain attached she needs to deal with what seems to her to be the biggest burden, a double life.

Samantha's story is similar. She has been working as a sexual worker for the last three years. During this time she has not seen her family and is not planning to let them know about her work. What is the price she is paying for attachment?

(Question: what's the hard side [of your work?])

We have to be with many men. As a woman said, 'you have to deal with drunken.' That's hard for us, to be with one man, with another one. Also people criticize us, it's hard...the best side [of this job] is that you get money...well, in this life there is not 'best side' because there is no happiness, that doesn't exist, because you get money but no emotions.

Samantha prefers to daily deal with something she defines as “hard,” and with a life that, deep inside, she knows does not bring happiness, rather than risk losing the connection (attachment) to her family, were she to tell them about her lifestyle.

The need for attachment can also be seen in people’s search for a partner. Most of the interviewed women have had more than one fixed partner in their lives. Many of those relationships have been characterized by abuse. Nevertheless, they continue to look for a life partner. Estela tells her story,

A man fell in love with me, that’s what he said. He took me away from home. He convinced me and threw me in this ‘environment’...Now I have three children, but not from that man. I left him because he treated me very bad. He used to take my money...After some time, I looked for another man...

It is interesting to notice that although she was introduced to the sexual industry by a partner, she still will take the risk of being involved again with a man.

A similar story is seen in Stephanie’s life. She says,

I met a new man. He fell in love with me and we began a relationship, I already had a child...He gave me a bad life, he beat me up, he did very bad things to me [Stephanie is now crying], so I left him...I left him because he used to beat up my baby...Once tied me with a chain and beat me up with a shotgun. His parents told me, ‘It’s better for you to leave, because you can not live like this’. So, I took my child and went to Guayaquil...[after some time] he went looking for me, and I still live with him...the first partner I had abused of me too much, I still have proves of that [Stephanie shows me scars in her arms].

Longing for what is lacking, these women search for permanent attachments.

The need for attachment, or to say it another way, the fear of rejection and abandonment is so ingrained in people’s lives, that many are willing to go through extreme sacrifices in order to avoid rejection and abandonment. Chapter 4, Prostitutes and Society: Rabbit Women (p.51-59) describes more the type of attachment

experienced, the rejection, and/or abuse that these sexual workers have experienced with their parents, children, and society as a whole.

How would/could this help the reader understand a sexual worker's understanding of God? As it will be seen, some people have tried to demonstrate a relationship between attachment theory and religion. This author theorizes that as we learn more about how attachment and/or rejection are experienced by the interviewees in their daily lives and with different people, it will be helpful in learning about their understanding of and experience with God.

### **Family = Attachment?**

As previously stated, this study explored the sexual workers' experiences with attachment, which will be analyzed from the perspective of abandonment.

It has already been described in Chapter 1 how infants look to their caregivers in order to receive comfort and protection. The kind of responses that they receive will largely determine the way they relate to other people as adults. This has been analyzed from the perspective of attachment. In the stories of the interviewed sexual workers, the experience of abandonment and rejection has largely replaced that of attachment. It could be suggested that abandonment is the counterpart of attachment. Therefore, as abandonment is being described, conclusions regarding attachment can be elaborated as well. The presence of abandonment eliminates the experience of attachment, but not its need.

As the interviewed sexual workers recounted their life stories, it was noticeable the importance they gave to the presence of parents in children's lives. Maria grew up with her dad and stepmother who did not want her; therefore, she was sent to a religious



school where she grew up until she was 10. At that time, her biological mother came and took her to be with her. Maria lived for one year with her mother and brother, who sexually abused her. Her mother did not believe her when she reported the abuse, and because she was also being physically abused, she decided to leave and started to work as a prostitute when she was 11. All of this made her bitter about life. She says,

[I had] resentment against everything: people, men, women. When I saw other people being happy and I was unhappy, I was angry, I said, "Why couldn't I be like her, like that girl or that woman, or to have a home like they have." When I saw a mother being nice with her children, I said, "Why couldn't I have a mom like that?" My dad was nice, but my mom destroyed my life. She practically destroyed my life..." Many years later, Maria visited her mother with her children: "...[I told my mom] that I didn't have a place to sleep, and that I was with my children. She said that she didn't have enough space, but I could stay that night if I wanted. I said, "Thanks a lot," but I left. I came here to see my friends, and they gave me a place to stay until I rented my own place.

The power of attachment can be seen in that in spite of the negative experiences Maria had with her mom who, according to her words, destroyed her life, at a time of need, Maria visited her mom and not only asked her for a favor but also wanted her children to meet their grand-mother.

Gladys also describes the importance she assigns to parent's presence in children's lives. She says,

I didn't grow up with my parents, I grew up with my step-parents, but that is not the same that growing up with the real parents. I imagine that to grow up with strange people may not be the same than growing up together with you mom and dad. Maybe that's one of the reason one makes mistakes...[My step parents] gave me everything: I went to the best school, I had good clothes, but I never had a caress...[When I was 10] I felt like I had everything...[I realized I needed a caress] when I was a teenager.

In Gladys' words it is possible to see that as a person grows up, the importance of parental care and attachment start to have real value. Also, as an adult Gladys identified

what was of most importance to her as a child: her parent's presence and love, rather than the provision of material goods. This would seem to be confirmed in Isabel's experience,

(Question: Suppose you are sleeping and Jesus appears to you and say, "I'll concede you three wishes")

The wish I would want the most is to go back to the time we lived in family [Isabel has tears now]... with my parents. That's the biggest wish I could have...because it was the happiest time despite of the fact that we were poor, but we were happy: my siblings, my parents, all together. Yes, I think that was the happiest time of my life.

As it was with Gladys, richness or poverty did not define a close relationship with the family. Rather, communion with members of the family diminishes the importance of material goods.

The story of Isabel with her parents and siblings seems to be more of an exception than a rule in the lives of these women. Cecilia says,

My father and mother gave us away to some uncles who became our parents...When I was three months old I became sick. My mom took me to the hospital and took care of me for a while, and when she did not have more money to pay for the medicine, she left me there [literally: "threw me away there"]. She told her brother to pick me up...He paid for my medicine, milk, and so on...She said to him, "I give her to you. Take her with you..." Later on, she gave my siblings to him also.

This kind of abandonment affects the person in different ways. Resentment is one of the byproducts of abandonment, and probably one of the most difficult feelings to get rid of. As it has already been mentioned, Gladys grew up with her step-parents. When she was 15 years old she met her biological parents. She says about that meeting,

[The meeting] was not emotional, I had resentment...because they gave me away, they abandoned me when I was a child...I still have that resentment [now Gladys is talking with tears]...I think, "Why do parents, especially the mother, why do they leave a child" The mother should be willing to do anything (in order) to keep her children with her.

Although her parents gave her to a family that provided for “everything”, she still felt that she was abandoned, and even after many years that memory of abandonment produces resentment.

Resentment is also what Maria feels,

I hated the whole world. I hated them all. I wanted revenge, that’s why I caused problems [fights]. I didn’t care. I almost didn’t care if I ended up killed. I lived just because I was alive. I had a lot of resentment toward the whole world...I enclosed myself in that pain that [my mom and brother] caused me...I hated my family, I hated the people, I hated the whole world...I forgot everything, God, I forgot everything.

The need of family is seen throughout people’s lives, and its presence is especially important in events we learn to see as the ones that should be shared with the family. Gladys says,

I didn’t grew up [with my siblings]...I have never shared anything with my parents or siblings: a Christmas, a Mother’s day, a Father’s day...None of them remember me for my birthday. Well, if my parent’s don’t remember it, much less my siblings would.

It seems that she would be content to share at least one Christmas, or mother’s and father’s day, or to be remembered on her birthday; the need of attachment is so great that even the smallest sign of its presence would suffice for her.

Rejection, just as abandonment, produces the rupture of attachment. Sex workers have to deal with rejection from family and society. In this chapter some examples of the rejection they have to deal with in their own families will be presented.

Maria tells her story of rejection,

My mom used to sell wood. She would send me to the forest with my brother...He abused me sexually...He’d beat me up to stay with me...Once I told my mom, ‘Mom, this is what my brother does to me’; but she didn’t believe me, she believed my brother...I felt rejected because my mom didn’t like me...I’m a mom now, if a daughter tells me something like that, I’d try to stop it, no? But my mom beat me up, called me liar,

told me that I was a prostitute, even though I wasn't one yet...She was very violent with me, so I decided to leave.

It can be deduced from this story that at least some children feel rejected when parents do not protect them from suffering, and when their stories are not believed.

Marisol tells,

When I was 9 years old my mom sent me to work in a house [in another city]...[When I wanted to go back home] she said 'No'...When I started to work in 'this' my parents said they didn't wanted to know anything about me, that I should forget she was mom, that I wasn't her daughter anymore, that they couldn't have a daughter like 'this', that I couldn't be their daughter...It hurt me[to hear that], but not as much as the first time they left me. In my mind they were guilty because, had they kept me next to them, 'this' wouldn't have happened; but now that time passed by, I don't think they are guilty, because I was an adult when I started 'this'.

Marisol suffered a "double" rejection. The impact that rejection had in her life can be seen in two points. First, she repeatedly emphasized that her parents did not want to have any kind of relationship with her when they knew about her work as a sexual worker. Second, although she now does not blame her parents for her decision to participate in sex work, one could wonder whether the rejection of her parents when she was a child was present in her mind as she decided to become a sexual worker.

Literature tells us that low self-esteem is very common among prostitutes, and rejection certainly would contribute to low self-esteem (Young et al, 2000; Romero-Daza et al., 1998-1999; Erickson et al., 2000; James, 1977). When children feel abandoned or rejected by their parents, they lose their concept of self-worth and abandon themselves as well. Maria's experience reflects this idea,

[My brother abused sexually of me, my mom beat me up and called me a prostitute. Then I left home] and began this 'life'. I dedicated myself to drink, I abandoned myself, took, a bad way. I dedicated myself to use drugs, because I felt alone. All the money I got I used it to drink, I drank a lot. I also dedicated myself to use drugs.

Could it be that the loss of attachment would induce a person to engage in destructive behaviors, because self-value is not present?

The rejection some of these women suffered did not end when they grew up.

Laura informs,

I got married, I became pregnant and my husband left me...I was 15 days in a hospital...I had fallen down and that caused me to have an abortion...I had 4 children at that time...I asked my mom for help, but she didn't help me. She said that I sought for the problem, so now I would have to find the solution...I tried to survive with my friend's help...Then I went away [from my family] because of what my mom told me.

Laura's experience shows that some of these women suffered rejection not only from their parents and siblings but also from their partners. It comes as no surprise that some of them do not want their children to know about their work simply to avoid one more rejection.

Some of the stories already described show that sex workers do not tell their children about their job to avoid rejection. (Please see section: Sock inside out). Isabel says,

I send my daughter to a religious school to keep her away from what I do...That's the most important for me, that my daughter will not find out about what I 'do'.

Veronica's experience is similar,

I don't want my son to know [about my job], that's why I started to work in my house again...[If he finds out about my 'job'] he'll hate me, I don't know. That's why I left my 'job'.

The interviewed women who shared information about their lives with their children, or had to admit it when asked about, have had a positive response from them.

Maria tells,

My children say, 'we are not ashamed of what you are'...[That] makes me feel good, because I see they don't reject me. They go out with me, my son-in-law and daughters-in-law hug me, kiss me, call me 'mamita' [mommy] they introduce me to other people...I don't feel they reject me.

When she talks about the love she receives from her children and their partners, she reflects on it in terms of attachment (non-abandonment). Although she has to continue to work as a sexual worker, she does not complain that her children do not help her financially. Rather, she is very much content with the fact that they do not reject her. Nevertheless, one of Maria's sons complains that because she was careless in managing her money when she was young, she cannot give them an inheritance. The issue of attachment is again present in her response to him,

[I told my son] 'You have to realize that I have never abandoned you. I have not abandoned you. I took you with me everywhere. I gave education to all of you. That is the most important thing.

When Maria says education is the most important thing she has given to her children, she seems to be referring to the material goods she has provided for them. The fact that she has not abandoned him is mentioned repeatedly, which shows the importance it has for her.

These women have been willing even to become sex workers in order to stay with their children, therefore, it would seem that they cannot find any acceptable reason for the abandonment they suffered,

[Talking with tears] why parents, especially the mother, why do they leave their children...The mother should do anything [to keep her children with her]...She must be responsible for her children, take care of them. Both parents are responsible, but more is the mother...She must do anything to be with them and take care of them, even if her children later on don't treat her nicely...I don't know why they did it [abandoned us] probably they had their reasons...I would have felt much better if my mom had become a prostitute and had taken care of us.

(Question: Are you saying that your mom was a prostitute?)

No, but I would have felt much better if she had said, 'I became a prostitute but I didn't abandon you' [Gladys].

On the one hand, like with Maria, attachment with a parent can be so strong that it remains even after experiencing severe abuse. She visited her mother, who used to beat her and who did nothing to prevent her brother's sexual abuse; but this does not seem to be the experience of other people. A person can 'fight' for attachment, or wait for it, only so long, and then that attachment need will be transferred to another person, usually, to one that proves to provide for their needs. Cecilia says,

We grew up with an uncle, brother of my mom. He provided for us and gave us education; we used to call him 'Dad'... Sometimes [my mom] came and told us to go home with her, but we would say 'No'. Then she would cry because she realized she had done a big mistake giving us away... We thought our father didn't love us... Yes, he gave us away, so, our whole love was for our uncle who took care of us.

As this chapter described the experiences of the interviewed sexual workers, it was possible to see the importance that attachment with parents has in children's lives, and how the presence of rejection and abandonment can cause pain that will remain for their entire lives. Rejection and abandonment can wreak psychological havoc and psychological trauma on a person's life as well as color the way life is understood.

The presence, or rejection, of parents is not only important from an emotional point of view, but it also could have a profound influence in the decisions children make as they become adults, not only in their relationship with others but also in how they perceive and treat themselves.

From the stories related in this chapter, it was also possible to see that once a person has experienced losing an attachment that she considered important, that person

will do anything within her power to keep the remaining attachment relationships in her life.

Attachment with parents is so important that even after severe abuse and/or rejection from a parental figure, a person could still seek to restore that relationship. In other cases, the parental figure, and therefore, the attachment relationship with her/him, could be transferred to another person, thus satisfying the need for attachment.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PROSTITUTES AND SOCIETY: RABBIT WOMEN

Just like these women experienced abandonment from their caregivers, they also continue to experience abandonment as adults. Presented in this chapter will be the experiences of prostitutes regarding rejection, and therefore the lack of attachment they have to deal with as they relate to different parts of society.

First, their experiences and feelings regarding the acceptance and/or rejection they receive from society will be presented. Tatiana says,

[Sometimes I feel embarrassed] because people walk by, they look at us and laugh. Our families don't know what we are doing; they live deceived. Likewise, [the people that laugh at us] could be deceived...the same thing or worst could happen to them. There is always mockery...I feel bad [when people treat me that way] because they look at us as to a strange animal, as if we'd be animals, without realizing that the same or something worst could happen to them.

The need for belonging is clear in Tatiana's words. She would like people to not focus only on her job, but to realize that she is also a human being. Not only do people discriminate against sexual workers; they also treat them as if they were animals. This idea is mentioned in other interviews. Mariana says,

[We prostitutes] have many problems. We are not well seen...People look at us like strange animals.

Isabel added something that affected this author personally, as he had not considered this issue before the interviews,

Many men come to interview us, to study us, always the sexual workers...Why is that inclination, that curiosity toward us...Sometimes we feel like those rabbits, those rabbits for experiments.

In the comments mentioned above there seems to be a pattern: not only do sexual workers feel that they are not part of society, they also feel that they do not belong to the

human race. It could be suggested that to come to such a conclusion, a person would have to deal with a tremendous amount of rejection over a long period of time, which seems to be the case with these women.

Sexual workers do not only suffer rejection from those they have to interact with, but also from those that should protect them as citizens. At the time these interviews were done, they were dealing with a problem regarding the brothels where they worked. Ingrid comments on that,

Now the Major wants to take the brothels to another part of the city [Note: they are working close to a historical part of the city, therefore the Major wants to prevent tourists from seeing them]. We don't oppose to that, but he has to treat us as persons and human beings that we are...He has to give us a solution. He just closed our places of work, and now all of us are working in the streets. He thought that by closing [the brothels] everything was going to be over, but things are not that way. Now the situation is worst because the girls have to work in the street and that is more dangerous.

Isabel also commented about the problems they have with the people who should protect them,

Sexual work is discriminated in our country...Authorities allow this work, people foment it, but we are repressed anyway...The police tries to get money from us with any excuse...Lately the Major of the city closed down the brothels where we worked...We are ready to move to another place, but we ask for...a place with the basic things that every human being needs.

It is important to notice the need they have to state that they are human beings and that they should be treated as such. It would also seem, that after so much rejection, they are ready to be discriminated against and asked to move to another place (thus breaking again any attachment they may have at the place they work now). However, they do not want to give up being treated as humans.

Although it may sound paradoxical, prostitutes have to deal with their clients' rejection as well. Isabel says,

Now our own clients discriminate us. They say, 'Let them go, let them go', thus supporting the Major...Our society is machista, kind of conservative, but that's pure hypocrisy...Some of our clients are politicians. Many of the prostitute's husbands are policemen, then, what do they talk about?...This is pure hypocrisy...They do the same thing we do, but they try to repress us.

Mariana's perception of these events seemed to be the same,

Men use us and, at the same time, 'talk' about us...They call us, can I use bad words? (yes, you can)...the 'bitches', ugly words like that. They offend us. That's very bad.

According to Isabel and Mariana a feeling of unbelief is reflected. Perhaps they could understand that their parents or children could reject them because of their work; but now their clients also criticize them and talk against them.

As previously presented, many prostitutes work in this job because of lack of education and other opportunities (Young et al., 2000; Weiner, 1996). Once they have worked as prostitutes, they find another hindrance in their attempts to find an alternative job: people will not give them job opportunities because of their past. Although identifying the causes of prostitution is not the central theme of this thesis, in analyzing this subject it is possible to observe the rejection sexual workers find in society.

Gladys says,

The whole world looks to us negatively...Some people criticize. Others don't...People didn't say anything to me. They talk at our backs...If I could do other job, I'd do it, but I think people wouldn't give me that opportunity...I've never tried to get other job, but I can imagine [how they'd react if they'd know about my 'job'].

Her fears seem to be grounded not in her own experience, but perhaps in the ones of other prostitutes, such as Marisol. She says,

Once I went to look for a job...In the place I went the woman told me [I could have the job], but the husband [who have seen me where I work] talked with her, and then she told me to leave, to go to other place.

It also seems that they would have the same kind of problems in trying to rent a place to live. Mariana says,

If I go to rent a place, if the owner knows I'm a prostitute, he will not rent to me. He'd say, 'Those people [sex workers] have bad influence.'

Mariana's experience contrasted the happiness Cecilia showed when talking about the acceptance she receives from her landlord,

In Quito the owner of my house knows I'm 'working'. Also my neighbors know. (Question: how is your relationship with them?) Very good, excellent...My job is in my work. In my house it's different...I like to respect where I live because there nobody disrespect me.

Cecilia seems to be sure that she will not do anything that could cause her to lose the attachment she now has with her landlord and neighbors.

In the stories presented so far in this chapter, it is possible to appreciate the variety and intensity of the rejection sexual workers have to face. This rejection can be so strong as to make them feel that they do not even belong to the human race. The rejection they suffer affects them not only emotionally, but also hindrance access to basic daily needs, such as having a place to live.

### **What about Church?**

In the next chapter the interviewed sexual workers' experiences with God will be discussed. Because Church can be considered part of society as a whole, their experience with it will be described in this chapter. What have their experiences with the Church been like?

It seemed that the main reason they went to Church was to communicate with God and to pray for His favor rather than to relate to other people,

When I go to Church I feel happy, I feel rested. I say, 'Dear God, I have lit a candle to my Saints. Help me, that the little I 'work' is for my children [Cecilia].

Gladys said,

I go to Church...I ask Him to take care of me, to protect me from sickness, of everything bad...to forgive me, that someday this [prostitution] has to end, no?

Their devotional life was not limited to going to Church. Isabel says,

Sometimes I go to Church, but many times I pray at home. I ask God. I even kneel down...I try to be well with Him, I always ask Him to forgive me for what I do.

Being right with God seemed to be the primary focus of her spiritual life, without giving much attention or importance to the physical place where she got in touch with God.

Do sexual workers' perceive any difference between Church people and the ones they interact with daily? Ingrid said,

(Question: Have you seen people in Church who know what you do?)

Yes.

(Question: how was their behavior towards you?)

No, normal, normal. There are many peoples that, for example, one walks in the street and they know what one does. Some know how to respect, others don't.

People from Church have a normal behavior towards her, not better or special or worth describing. She does not have much to say about it, but immediately begins to give an example of people in the streets.

What about religious leaders? This group of people seems to be the one who has treated the interviewees the worst. Isabel told her story,

I don't like religious education, I've never agreed with it, but I've always studied in religious schools....[I send my daughter] to a religious school to keep her away from what I do.

(Question: Why didn't you agree with religious education?)

When I was 14 years old I was the girlfriend of a priest...So I think, what can you expect from priests, no?...I used to eat his consecrated wafer, the divine wine...once I received a scholarship to study in a religious school, but I preferred to lose it.

A somehow similar story was told by Samantha,

(Question: Would you ask for help in a Church?)

I don't think so...Because where I 'work', sometimes the nuns walk by and they cover their mouths, why? We also are daughters of God...there is a priest that goes there [to have sex with the prostitute]...Also, some religions ask for tithe. Is it for the benefits of the 'altos' [authorities of the Church]?...[once some nuns walked by where I was] and they covered their mouths, as if something was smelling bad...I felt bad, I insulted them in my mind....Some nuns have had children, then, what can they say? Nothing.

Ingrid and Samantha raised some issues. First, it would seem that people's behavior outside the Church has more influence on others than their compliance with religious practices, such as the partaking of sacraments. Isabel complied with taking the consecrated wafer and the divine wine, but her affair with a priest had much more significance for her. Second, in Samantha's story, it is noticeable that the disrespectful way she was treated by the nuns, and the fact that some nuns are known to have had children, made her see them with no moral authority.

The Church is not seen as a place where to find help. Estela says,

(Question: Have you received any help from the Church?)

No, I never received any help...I have never received anything, because the opportunity never occurred of saying, 'I need this or that, could you help me?'

In a previous part of the interview she also said,

I'd like to get out of prostitution. My efforts are not enough, I'm alone, but that's OK...Someday, with my efforts, I'll go forward.

Even though she goes to Church, she does not think she could receive help from it; she sees herself as being alone, and only through her efforts will she be able to go forward in life. It would also seem that Church, other than being a place where one can pray to God, is more where one goes to give than to receive. Estela said,

I have never had any help [from Church.] Instead, I have always paid for a mass seeking a Saint, God, the Virgen. I have gone [there] to have something blessed, or to give alms.

As we have previously seen, Samantha said,

Some religions ask for tithes. Is it for the benefit of the 'altos' [leaders of the Church]...Some nuns help but it's to get a benefit out of that...People that helps wants to get something in return...Excuse me, no? But you have a benefit now with me: the interview. I have the benefit of the money you gave me [NOTE: US\$10 was paid for each interview].

Church people were compared to 'everyday' people. There was no difference between one and the other. If street people want something in return, so does Church people. If street people criticize and condemn them, so do Church people.

Estela commented on her experience,

I'm a good Catholic like my mother, but I have two sisters who are Evangelical...My mom doesn't love them as much because they want us to become Evangelical...My mom tell me that I'm the one she loves the most...I think my mom would be disappointed with me [if I become Evangelical]...I don't think I'll change...

Marisol has a similar conflict,

"...About the religious life, I've been very confused. I've grown up among Catholics and Evangelicals, then, I have this doubt or this other doubt. Should I be in this religion or in this other one? I don't stop believing in God, because God is Omnipotent, and He exists, no? But I've always had confusion...Some people say, 'Catholic religion is not true...Look at this, look at that'...I don't know what to do..."

Religious denominations are seen as competing for getting the sheep from the other flock, but not as a place where one can go for help.

From the experiences these women had with the Church, it can be deduced that they do not see Church as the only place where God can be found. Neither is Church seen as a place where one can go for help. Rather, it is a place where one goes to give. The interaction with people from Church was mentioned either as being the same than that with people in the streets, or as negative, especially regarding to the leaders of the Church.

Religious organizations were described as being more preoccupied with stealing another flock's sheep than in the well being of its members. Since they lack most social attachments, sexual workers reported how they attach to each other.

### **Attaching among Themselves**

The interviewed women for this study belong to the Asociacion Pro Defensa de la Mujer (Association for the Defense of Women). This Association was created on March 8, 1994. Its goal is to defend the rights of the sexual workers. Today it has a membership of 450 voluntarily affiliated women.

Sexual work is neither legal nor illegal in Ecuador. Nevertheless, the police many times give problems to sex workers, and this association helps them in getting out of prison. Three years ago they were given an office to be used for five years at no charge by the Division Provincial de Salud (Provincial Department of Health). They do not know where they will have their office after the completion of that term.

At the time the interviews were done the biggest problem they were facing in Quito was that the Alcalde (Mayor) had closed the "day brothels." Therefore, many women were forced to work on the streets in a part of the city that is very dangerous. The Association was trying to fight back the Alcalde's decision. The Association united all its



members into an effective bond that allowed them to face as a group the society that rejected them as individuals. Appendix B describes some of the members' duties and privileges.

Some non-governmental organizations donate condoms and anti-contraceptive pills to the Association, which are distributed among its members.

The need for attachment is seen, not only as one of the reasons for the creation of this Association, but also in the disciplinary measures they apply to the women who could create disruption of their unity by fighting with other members. Some of interviewees mentioned the president of the association as a person who cares for them. Perhaps members can find in this association something they do not find anywhere else: somebody that will defend them, educate them, take care as much as possible of their physical and emotional well-being, and not only recognize them as human beings and women, but ratify their right in celebrating festivities such as Women's International Day, Mother's day, and Christmas. The way society, family, friends, and neighbors see these women, is reflected in the way they see God.

When these sexual workers are in association with each other, they seem to "belong," and feel securely attached. Together they are normal women who work in the sex industry. Together they are mothers, family and friends, not rabbit women. Outside their group all they can hope for is to be seen and related to as rabbit women.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PROSTITUTES AND GOD

While interviewing the sexual workers it was necessary not only to transcribe their words, but to attempt to describe their understanding of God. In doing so, attention was given to their statements as well as the ideas mentioned “between the lines”.

Two main ideas about God seemed to characterize their understanding of Him. First, God was seen as a “God with limited power.” This phrase will be used to describe a God who has power to protect them, but not enough as to help them find another job.

Second, the idea of an “‘Unrelated’ God” was raised. This means that for them God has nothing to do with the fact that they have to be sexual workers. That is not something that He should be accountable for or to which He was connected.

#### **God with Limited Power**

The interviewees described God positively. Comment such as Cecilia’s were almost a pattern in describing their relationship with God,

When I go out of my house I ask God to accompany me, that nothing [bad will] happen to me, that God will take care of me.

He is seen as the Protector, the one that would take care [physically] not only of them, but also of their families,

When I wake up I ask God to take care of me...to take care of my children, my family, and especially my mom...[Tatiana].

In reading their stories and all the problems in their lives, it is possible to see a difference between their experiences and what Carolyn Bohler described,

God representations are gleaned early in life, modified as we grow, and function powerfully to evoke affect and behavior. (2001, p.23)

According to this, one could assume that sexual workers would have a very negative concept of God, but this seems not to be the case.

None of the sex workers saw God as responsible for their having to end up working in sexual work. They clearly stated that they believed in God, prayed to Him and asked for protection. When it came to asking about what is God's role in their having to work as sex workers, they do not comment directly on that. Nevertheless, a close look at their words suggested a pattern of thinking along these lines: God is powerful and can protect me and help me, but when it comes to helping me get out of this job, He can not do anything about it.

It may be important to notice the names they used to refer to God. Two of them have special significance as their words in relation to Him are analyzed. First, "Diosito lindo", which literally means, "Little pretty God." The second one is, "Niño Divino", which means, "Divine Child."

Cecilia said,

When I go out of my house I ask God to accompany me...that God will take care of me...I say, 'Diosito lindo' take me with happiness in my way'. I've been in two car accidents, and 'Diosito lindo' saved me.

She used the name God when asking him to accompany her. Although she survived two car accidents, God did not prevent her from having the accidents. Perhaps, God becomes "Diosito" because He was not able to prevent the accident from happening, and "lindo" because she was spared from death.

Another explanation for the use of diminutive could be what Johnny Ramirez-Johnson said, in a verbal conversation with this author, when referring to Cecilia's comments,

It seems that she sees God as limited by the same things she is limited by. She has to be a sexual worker. Therefore, God accepts that limitation and takes care of her safety.

A similar pattern is seen in Estela's words,

I believe a lot in the Niño Divino (Divine Child), in the Niño Diosito [Little Child God]...Lately I have not cared much for the Niño Divino, but this year I put a light to him [to his picture], his layette, and things are going better, thanks God.

Once the "Divine Child" has proven Himself powerful enough to make things go better, then, He becomes 'God'. Although God is called 'God' sometimes, the 'diminutive' form is often mentioned as well,

For example, if I lose something, and I can't find it, I say, 'ay my God, Niñito Dios, where is it?'...Last week I had to had a tooth taken out. [My face] was swollen for a whole week. I said, 'Ayyy my God, ayy...' but slowly I began to feel better. I had the tooth removed, and all those things. I believe in God, yes, I believe in Diosito lindo (Estela).

Perhaps, God is called "Niñito Dios" and 'Diosito' because He did not stop things from getting lost, or because it took a whole week to get better from a bad tooth.

Why use the diminutive form when referring to God? Adoum (2000) says that the use of the diminutive form denotes submission, humiliation, supplication, and shyness. Are the interviewees, therefore, trying to convince God to help them? Is it just a tender way of naming Him? Does the diminutive form suggest that He is not a grown up God, and therefore, not yet a powerful God?

As was mentioned earlier, the interviewed sexual workers did not see God as one to whom they could go for help to find another kind of job,

Thanks God, I sell all the merchandise I buy. Thanks God I have that luck. Anyway, I have to "work" [as a sex worker] in the afternoon because with my other job is not enough. I would like to get out of this life. Someday, I would like to leave this, but my efforts are not enough. I'm alone [I don't

have husband], but that's OK. Someday with my efforts I'll go forward ['voy a salir adelante'] [Estela].

It would seem that God was not directly helping her to sell the merchandise.

Rather He gives her luck to do it. When it came to looking for an alternative job, she did not think that God could help her in that. She felt she was by herself, and that only by her own efforts would she will be able to find another job. Despite God's help in selling merchandise, she had to work as a sexual worker *anyway*. God provided but not as much as she needs.

Estela also said,

For the other [sex workers] to see that it is possible [to change our lifestyle], one can do whatever one wants. I'm stubborn, I say, 'it's possible. Let God and the Virgen give me determination and good health, determination and strength'...Because if He [God] says 'No', even if you try really hard you won't be able [to do something] because He said 'No'. But, if He wants [say 'yes'], why not?

It is interesting to notice that, on one hand, Estela did not think of God as someone who could help her in finding another job. On the other hand, it would seem that she would get another job only if God wished her to do so. Perhaps, she did not think He would help her in this situation because, even though she had been lucky to sell the merchandise she bought, she had not been lucky enough to survive.

When Ingrid was asked what would she ask Jesus if He were to appear to her in a dream telling her that He would grant her three wishes, she said,

I would ask Him health for me, for my love ones, and that...I don't know.  
I would as Him to help me so that I can change my lifestyle.

It seems that she was sure God would give health to her and her family, but there was certain amount of doubt that He would be willing and/or able to help her to find another job.

Although from the comments mentioned above one could suggest that they do not rely in God to find another job, it is interesting to see that they believe He protects and helps them *even* in their jobs. Marisol's experience is an example of this. She said,

Sometimes when I'm having a bad day [no clients], I say, 'God help me'. Then I say, 'I shouldn't ask you this, because this is wrong'. God is good, God is generous, God is love, I think He gives it to me, although He may not want to.

(Question: Does He give you the clients?)

Yes, because I get the money from them.

It would seem that God's love was so big that He blesses her, He even found clients for her. She goes on to say,

What does God feel for me? A bit of piety, I think [smile]. I think that a bit of piety...I've read in the Bible that God suffers when He sees His children going astray. I think He feels hurt, wounded for not having me as he would like to...It's as if I would be pinching Him every so often...but He is good.

Marisol saw God as suffering with her. He not only suffered because she was a sexual worker, but also He suffered for her needs. Therefore, although He was not content with her work, He provides clients for her, adapting Himself to her reality, in order for her not to suffer other needs such as lack of food, a place to live, and so on. She seemed to feel that His love was so big that He would be with her and bless her in spite of her job.

### **The 'Unrelated' God**

The categorization of God's relationship with this group of sexual workers is here characterized as 'unrelated' thus describing a perspective in which God is not related in any way when it comes to the prostitutes' misfortune in having to do that job.

Maria was sexually abused by her brother, and her mother did nothing to stop that abuse when she told her about it. Then, when she was twelve years old, she left her home and started to work as a prostitute. She said,

I had a lot of resentment. I forgot everything. God, I forgot everything.  
Alcohol and drugs were everything for me...

(Question:... Did you have resentment towards God?)

No, no. Resentment to everything, I had hatred towards, the people, men, women, everything.

It seems that the problems she had in life made her forget about God.

Nonetheless, when it comes to resentment, she does not mention Him, which could imply that in her mind God had nothing to do with the situations in her life that made her decide to be a prostitute.

Isabel reported,

I believe a lot in God... I always commend myself to Him, even when I go to 'work', I'm always thinking about Him. When I see that my daughter is not coming back home, I commend her to Him, I believe a lot in God...I even kneel down to pray...Always I ask Him to forgive me for what I do, but this is my life, no? Somehow I have to support myself...I have been thinking about traveling [to another country], or opening my own business here.

God was a constant and positive presence in her mind. Her reliance on His protection and concern for her seemed to be total. Isabel saw God as the One that would take care of her and her daughter. Sexual work was her life, what she chose to do, and she would leave it when she found an alternative to it. It would seem to me that the only thing God had to do regarding her work was to forgive her sins. When it came to the safety realm, she leaned fully on Him.

## Is God like Our Parents?

As was shown in the Literature Review some people perceive God as they perceive their parents, while others look to God for an attachment figure that will not fail them as their parents did.

Tatiana's experience was an example of the correlation between a positive view of parents and God. She said,

My dad and mom were very understanding. They always believed me everything that I said to them...As a child I liked to play, and they allowed me to do so...They always help us in everything...I believe in God because He is the only one...When I get up, or go to sleep, I ask the Lord, God, to help me, to accompany me, to guide my children.

As was previously shown, (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990) the compensation hypothesis proposed that certain aspects of religion, and particularly the belief in a loving, personal, available God, serve as a substitute for the secure attachment relations that people never had with their parents, or with other primary care givers (Kirkpatrick et al., 1990). This concept seems to properly describe the experience of some of the prostitutes involved in this study. Mariana's experience could serve as an example,

I don't have father, I didn't grew up with him, I don't have his surname either...My mom was tough. She beat me up a lot, she was very tough...I have always liked to go to church, I'm very Catholic, I like to lit a candle for my 'santitos'...to pray to ask (tell) God what you feel, what's happening, not only when one has problems, but to remember always the Lord. I'm very Catholic.

The concept of the compensation hypothesis goes along with the concept this author calls experiential theology: the sexual workers have seen and experienced in their own lives that God answered their prayers for protection. Their trust in God is not based on a philosophical conception of God, or because they have positive thinking. He had been a faithful protector for them, unlike the people that should have protected them and



did not. God's answer to their prayers was the fact on which they base their faith. A few examples of this idea follow,

I say, 'Diosito lindo, take me with happiness in my way.' I have been in two car accidents and Diosito lindo saved me...If I lose something I say, 'my God, Niñito Dios, where is it? Then I turn around and there it is...(Cecilia).

Tatiana also saw God as the one that answered her prayers,

Last year (there were problems with the police), and I had my 'record' (sex worker's license) expired. I was really afraid. When we got there (to the police station), the first thing I said was, 'Diosito lindo, help me, I've never been in jail.' Thanks God they let me go. I think God helped me because I asked it to Him.

These answered prayers contrast the response they have received from other providers or protectors. Cecilia did not find an excuse for her parents giving her away as a child. She said, "A mother must keep her kids with her even when she is extremely poor." Ingrid talked about the Mayor of the city of Quito, who closed the brothels where they were working. He had promised to open the brothels in another part of the city, but even after some months that did not happen. She said, "...He has to give us a solution...He closed the brothels and now we have to work in the streets..."

As one looks at the interviews, it is almost a constant to find phrases such as "I ask the Lord, to God, to help me, to accompany me, to guide my children and my family...[Tatiana]". Some of the sex workers testified that indeed God answered their prayers. Cecilia was about to travel in a bus, and at the last minute decided to sit in another seat. The bus had an accident and the person that was sitting in her first seat died. She said, "Diosito lindo saved me."

The roles the interviewees apply to God, namely, protector and provider, contrasted with the experience many of them had with their parents. According to their

own words, God indeed took care of them and answered their prayers. He seemed to become the “absolutely adequate attachment figure,” to use Kaufman’s description (as cited in Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990, p.318).

### **How is God?**

In reviewing the interviewee’s comments about God, the following characteristics seem to be applied to Him.

#### **Interested in Their Daily Lives**

Mariana put it this way,

To pray is to ask Him what one feels, [to tell Him] what is happening, not only when one has problems. We have to remember God always.

Isabel added, “...I always commend myself to Him...when I go to ‘work’ I’m always thinking about Him...”

They did not seek God only for protection, but also felt that He was interested in listening to what was happening in their lives, even when they went to ‘work.’ God, as we will notice below, was seen as greater than their work. Sexual work seems not to be a hindrance for God to relate to them.

### **Understanding**

(Question: if I would ask Jesus, ‘What do you think of Ingrid?’ What do you think that He’d tell me?)

May be He’d tell you, ‘she did it because...for a good cause, to save her mother’s life, because she had a daughter....I think God accepts us as we are, because He is the only one that forgives and the only one that we can ask for forgiveness. He is the only one that understands us [Ingrid].

Marisol says,

Sometimes when I’m having a bad day [with no clients], I say, ‘God help me’. Then I say, ‘I shouldn’t ask you this, because this is wrong’...God is good, God is generous, God is love, I think He gives it to me although he may not want to.

(Question: does He give you the clients?)  
Yes, because I get the money from them.

I believe God sees me as His servant. I didn't seek for this job because I wanted but for necessity...I trust only in Him because if I go to borrow something from somebody, they won't lend it to me. I ask Him to open a door, to give me [what I need] (Laura).

Ingrid, Marisol, and Laura stated they do not believe that God approves of what they do, but they also believe that He understands the circumstances that led them to choose that profession.

### **Suffering**

Sexual workers seem to see God as someone who suffers with them. Marisol said,

I've read in the Bible that God suffers when he sees His children going astray. I think He feels hurt, wounded for not having me as He'd like to...it's as if I'd been pinching Him every so often...but He is good.

Tatiana seemed to have the same kind of concept, "...He must be crying, I don't know..."

### **Fair**

Although some people, as we have seen, treats sexual workers differently than other people, not so with God. Marisol said,

Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, but she repented, and was forgiven. I hope that God also someday [will forgive me].

Samantha said,

Look, we are all human beings, no? We have conflicts, and I think that if He forgave Magdalene, no? He can forgive anybody....I think He is keeping a little place for me in heaven, yes.

God is seen as not acting with favoritism. If He has forgiven other prostitutes, He will certainly forgive them also.

## More about Forgiveness

From what has just been described, we can see that the majority of sex workers saw God as understanding and fair when it came to forgiving them. Nevertheless, this assurance could be something they have to struggle to maintain.

Cecilia says,

The only thing I ask is, 'Dear God, forgive me, I'm doing this for my children'...I know that God will not forgive me, because He doesn't like it [prostitution]. I know He will not forgive me. (Question: You say that you ask for forgiveness, but you also are saying that God does not forgive you) I don't know about it.  
(Question: Do you see that He helps you?)  
Yes.

Perhaps the fact that she sees God is helping her, gives her hope that God will also forgive her. That seems to be the case for Isabel. She said,

Question: Do you feel that God forgives you...?)  
Yes, I believe so, because if He wouldn't forgive me I'd probably be living in a critical economic situation, or may be I'd be always sick, or I'd have problems. I live well, I'm a healthy woman, the same my family...I think this is a clear manifestation that God...Maybe He doesn't like it, but He forgives me what I do, no?

The idea that their faith in God, and in this case also about His forgiveness is based on the palpable events of their lives: the fact that she was healthy and had a comfortable economic situation gave her the assurance of God's love and forgiveness.

In reading all these statements, one could be tempted to think that they take their work seemingly lightly, because they know God will forgive them anyway. According to Ingrid and Mariana, that does not seem to be the case. Mariana says,

(Question: If I'd ask God, What do you think of Mariana? What do you think He'd tell me?)  
He knows so many things that I have done. [He'd tell you] that I have been 'very' sinner. He is the only one who knows what to do with me, and with the rest of humanity.

(Question: What do you think He'd do with you?)

I don't know. I think He may feel pity for me. God is so powerful, when I ask Him, I ask that He be merciful to me.

She saw herself as a 'very' sinner. Therefore, only a powerful God would be able to help her.

Ingrid gave another example of this,

[I don't go to church] to repent for my sins, because what is done is already done. Someday when I die, then is when...Or before, maybe I'll be disabled...maybe then I'll repent for my sins, but now I can't do it because I continue to ['work'].

Although she recognized that what she was doing was something of which God did not approve. However, she believed that He would not forgive her, or that she should not ask for forgiveness, as long as she continues to work. She saw her sins so great that perhaps God will cause or allow her to become disabled, as a way to punish her. The load they carried for their 'work' was certainly overwhelming.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

What can one learn about the interviewed sexual workers' understanding of God after reading the interviews and complementary information? Each person could arrive at her own conclusion, as did the interviewees. Here I present a plausible view that draws together psychological and theological perspectives within the phenomenology of religion.

It has not been the intention of this paper to prove how their experiences could fit or describe any theory, nor try to apply forcefully a theoretical concept to their realities. Rather, the reader can discover what some people have suggested, based on theological and/or ethnographic and psychological studies, has been the personal experience of sexual workers in another country and culture, namely, Quito, Ecuador.

The interviewees have shown a profound dependency on God and reliance on His love, understanding, protection and forgiveness. The relationship established by some (Heller, 1986; Justice & Lambert, 1986; Kirkpatric & Shaver, 1990; Stein, 1968) between Attachment Theory and religion would/could explain the dependency and trust the sexual workers expressed toward God. It seemed that God had become the "absolutely adequate attachment-figure" for them (Kaufman, as cited in Kirkpatric & Shaver, 1990, p.318). Every person has the need for attachment, and people are willing to do almost anything in order to remain attached to others. This need for attachment was seen in their interactions with parents, children, partners, and different components of society. In their experiences, attachment was experienced as looking at a sock from the inside out, namely, at its very opposite manifestations: rejection and abandonment. During most of their lives they

experienced the brokenness of attachment [rejection and abandonment] with people in their family and in society. But their desire to be attached did not diminish. Instead, they sought someone who would not fail them. As they found that the people that were supposed to care and protect them did not fulfill that role, they, it was suggested, found in God some one who is reliable and who, as it was mentioned, could represent for them the absolutely adequate attachment-figure.

It was also presented that the interviewees' reliance on God was not based on theological doctrines (although all of the interviewees admitted being Roman Catholic, and most of them attended Church at least once in a while). Rather, they base their faith on the fact that their past experiences with God proved them that He answers their prayers for protection and help. As they talked about their belief in God they always mentioned some event in their lives when they saw God answering a prayer or protecting them. Doctrinal issues were not directly mentioned as the reason of their belief in God.

Something that was also noticeable in these interviews was the fact that despite the complete dependency sexual workers manifested in God's protection, none of them readily mentioned Him as the one who could help them to find another job. All of them expressed that prostitution was not their long-term plan and that they wished they could have another source of income. Perhaps, the fact that they did not ask God to help them find another job may manifest the view of a God with limited power (an implication that derives from reading "in between the lines" of their comments and not from direct statements on their part). Nevertheless, the names used at times when referring to God, such as, "Diosito" [Little God], Niño Divino [Divine Child], or Diosito lindo [Pretty little God] could suggest that in their minds, at least unconsciously, God is not a "grown up"

God who has the power to change their situations. The use of the diminutive form when referring to people is wide spread in Ecuador, and according to an Ecuadorian writer it denotes submission, humiliation, supplication, and shyness (Adoum, 2000).

As we analyzed their direct comments on God, it was observed that they saw Him as a God who is interested in their daily lives, understands their situations and the reasons that led them into prostitution. God not only sees them suffer but also suffers along with them, who is hurt by their sins but is willing to forgive them and who is thought of being fair.

The similarity of their experiences and comments with some theological proposals cannot be denied. Some of the particulars described in the concept of “The openness of God,” developed by Richard Rice (1980; 2001) can be used to summarize the characteristics described by the interviewees as they talked about God. The sexual workers’ experiences and narratives about God seem to perfectly fit the theological assumption of Rice’s conceptualization of an “open God.”

Studying the views prostitutes have about God helps us understanding them as humans instead of simply identifying them as being non-personal entities. Humans can (beginning with the parent-child dyad) enfranchise other humans as equal to themselves with the way they relate to each other, thus all humans become more like each other and closer to each other. In so far as we are closer to each other we are closer to God, in this case, a Christian Catholic, Ecuadorian God.

This study unified experiential description of who God is (phenomenology of religion) along with psychological understanding of the relationship between parents and their offspring (attachment theory) with a theodicy of God that presents a deity closer to



human needs and sufferer along with them (an open God). A God who is a neighbor as well as a protector (particularly of sexual workers), a God who is more a friend than a judge. In presenting such a God, Ecuadorian sex workers humanize themselves, our view of them, our view of ourselves and of each other.

Prostitutes' understanding of God is the title of this study. Has that statement been fully understood and explained? After reading the interviews and this paper, the author would like to suggest that if anyone would make a trip to Quito, find the street 24 de Mayo, and would spend time talking with the sexual workers working there, they may tell her/him that for them God is the one they rely on for protection and guidance, but to whom they do not request help for finding another job, or at least, He is not the first one to whom they would go to with that request. They would also probably say that although what they do is wrong, God accepts them because He is love. God also continues to answer their prayer and forgive their sins. He does that because He is understanding and fair. And because He is interested in their daily activities, they can talk with Him knowing that He suffers along with them the pains of being a sexual worker.

The interviewed sexual workers teach us about an open, vulnerable, attached God who acts like a neighbor and suffers like a parent, a God who is limited in power, like sexual workers are limited in power, a God who intervenes in life affecting it positively, but who is subject to life's circumstances as they are affected. He is a personal and close God who can be seen as a loving "Diosito lindo."

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to participate in a research study of the experience of prostitutes in Quito, Ecuador. The purpose of this study is the understanding of your perception on different matters of life. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed for approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be audio-taped and notes will be taken as well. Please be aware that because of the nature of the subject, this interview may be emotionally taxing for you as a participant.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable, and if at any time you wish to stop, you may do so without penalty. Your participation is strictly confidential and your responses will remain anonymous. To achieve this, at no time you will be asked to give any personal identifier. If any information that might reveal your identity is given during the interview, it will be deleted at the time of the transcription of the audio-tape. You will be requested to provide a pseudonym to be used as your name during this interview. The tapes with the interviews will be kept under lock in the office of one of the team's investigator at Loma Linda University.

If you have any further questions regarding the study or experience other concerns, you may contact Gerardo Toledo at phone: 224-2868

If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any complaint you may have about the study, you may contact Emma Child, consultant at CARE, at phone: 292-1871, ext. 2313

#### Informed Consent Statement:

"By signing below, I acknowledge that I freely consent to participate in this study and that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read the contents of the consent form and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the investigator. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. Signing this consent document does not waive my rights nor does it release the investigators, institution, or sponsors from their responsibility. I have received a copy of this informed consent for future reference."

Pseudonym

Date



## APPENDIX B

### ASSOCIATION PRO DEFENSE OF WOMEN

Association Pro Defense of Women's members' duties and privileges:

DUTIES: - Pay US\$ 1 monthly for membership (must be 18 years or older)

- To have a credential which demonstrate membership

- To have medical examination: Exam of vaginal plaque every 15 days, syphilis every 2 months, HIV every 6 months, and Papa Nicolao once a year. They have to pay for these exams, although they often receive discount showing their membership in this Association.

- Do not fight with other members: if they fight with another member they might be suspended for a period of time depending on the violation. If they attack another member with a knife they are expelled for a 2 years period.

- They must respect the owners of the houses where they work.

- Be present at all assemblies, which are held every 3 months.

PRIVILEGES:

- Members receive financial help in case of sickness, funeral expenses covered if they do not have relatives.

- They can borrow money and pay it back without interests. They have to leave a pledge such as a TV or the like, which will be return to them upon full payment of the debt.

- Activities such as "workshop about self-esteem" or the like are provided by the Association when they find people interested in helping them.

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- The Association gives a party for them on March 8 every year, thus  
celebrating the Women International Day.