

Bachelor thesis International Development Studies

Child prostitution in Asia: perspectives of the actors involved

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1. Introduction

This thesis addresses and discusses the topic of child prostitution. Precise numbers are unknown but it is estimated that worldwide up to 10 million children engage themselves in prostitution. Because these children are to be found in different settings that vary from 'simply on the street' to brothels, bars and hotels, it can be hard to locate them as often they are hidden. Existing data is fragmentary as it is primarily based on voluntary organisations and local research projects that have been conducted (Walker, 2002). These children, both boys and girls, are subject to a high risk of diseases, drug abuse, mental illness, violence, and other dangers (Willis & Levy, 2002).

The existence of prostitution dates back thousands of years, but the use of young children has been a more recent trend (Miles, 2000). The abuse of children on the other hand has been present throughout history; from the earliest account of time children have been killed, deserted, beaten and sexually harassed and abused. In ancient Rome and Greece the sexual abuse of children by adult men in brothels took place (Silbert & Pines, 1981). Over the last few decades the sexual exploitation of children has become a serious and complicated issue that has to be considered internationally rather than nationally (Broughton, 2009).

In this literature research I would like to focus on the Asian continent as there the scale of child prostitution has increased sharply in the last decades. Throughout this thesis I will make use of case studies conducted in Asian countries to get a hold of the practices of child prostitution there. Thailand will play a prominent role as there the problem is most prolific. Varying statistics estimate that between 30.000 and 75.000 Thai children under age 16 are working in bars, nightclubs and brothels (Blackburn, Taylor, & Davis, 2010). Prostitution in general has turned into a large business and as a consequence the commercial sex sector of several countries keeps growing in scale. Every year the sex industry which does not include just children is believed to add 22 billion dollar to Thailand's gross domestic product (Blackburn et al., 2010). Prostitution as a commercial sex sector is now integrated into the economic, social and political of life of many countries (Lim, 1998). Children can enter the prostitution industry for a variety of reasons and always there are several actors involved in this process.

With the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 children are to be safeguarded under article 34 which states that 'State parties will undertake to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse'; moreover, article 12 asserts that children have a right to be involved in decisions made on their behalf (Miles, 2000). However it has been shown that tackling child prostitution is hard. Although national and international action has been initiated against this form of child exploitation, the enforcement of laws remains a difficult issue.

Young boys and girls are desired for multiple reasons; together with other factors this is contributing to the growing sex tourism industry in Asia. The image of Western men travelling to the continent having sex as their main purpose of the trip is not uncommon.

These men are often considered as the perpetrators whereas the young child is being severely victimized. A prostitute is often stereotyped and characterized as a vulnerable woman being forced into prostitution and exploited by the pimp. Most research regarding prostitution is conducted on women, less on children and only a small amount of research has been done on male prostitutes. There is little comprehensive data about the extent, mechanisms or root causes of child prostitution (Children, 2014). More research has to be carried out in order to generate greater knowledge on the nature and magnitude of child prostitution. A better understanding of the social, economic and cultural contexts in which prostitution among children takes place can help identifying the problem, its conditions and effects that it entails. Moreover, this knowledge can generate conceptual frameworks and methods of research and can furthermore be useful in the formulation of policy (Children, 2014). In short, child prostitution has become a global and increasing problem, comprehensive data is lacking and therefore there is a need for new and more comprehensive research. Another issue at stake is the stereotype image that prevails of the actors involved. The media portrays a male perpetrator and a vulnerable woman as his client, however there might be more to prostitution than just this image. In particular children are seen as the most victimized, pitiful and suffering kind of sex worker. According to the media they are the ones who did not have a choice and whose childhood is being deprived, forever damaged by their experiences. As a result of this, aspects of life other than the abuse and sexual degradation of the child are concealed, whereas familial and social relationships are often more important than the intermittent sex work they perform (H. Montgomery, 2010). Thus, data regarding the context of the problem has often been overlooked.

This paper is a literature study as I did not do fieldwork in Asia myself. The methodology of this paper consists of primarily information obtained from scientific articles and books, yet occasionally I have used Internet sources, too. After I formulated my topic, I started searching for information by means of search engines such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and WUR online library. The first articles I read were written by Heather Montgomery and were about her fieldwork on child prostitution in Thailand. My first supervisor recommended me this author and I was happy to read her articles as they gave me a great first insight into the subject. In my search for useful sources I tried to be efficient by making use of different key words for having the best results. Search engines like ScienceDirect are very convenient as they are presenting a list of related and recommended articles, in this way lots of information can be obtained without putting much effort. After I succeeded in searching sufficient information I could start reading the articles and organizing the information in order to eventually start writing.

Prostitution can be studied from several conceptual frameworks. Victim perspectives like I just have described can be found in traditional feminist theory (Zigman, 1999). According to this theory prostitution entails domination of men over women and gender inequality. Within this theory there are several forms of feminism therefore feminist beliefs vary widely (Scoular, 2008). Radical feminists see prostitution as a practice in which women are being degraded and oppressed by men. Liberal feminists, however, consider prostitution a private business transaction in which the woman is free to enter the business; they view prostitution

as a civil right to any individual. A second theory is the labelling theory which is based on the idea that behaviour is being influenced or even determined by the terms used to describe the behaviour. Behaviours, then, are only deviant when society labels them as such. From the moment a woman enters the sex industry she gets labelled as a prostitute, a label which is hard to get rid of. This theory links deviance not to the act itself but to the response of others on the act. Labelling theory is closely related to the symbolic interaction theory, a theory that is focused on the interaction that takes place between social actors. The focus here is on analyzing how prostitutes and their clients understand their own behaviour in order to help them justify their behaviour (Prostitution, 2014). Beliefs among prostitutes vary from performing a meaningful service for their clients to helping their clients by keeping them company. Reality is the outcome of the development of social interaction between people. People can act in certain ways because of the meanings that they ascribe to a situation.

This paper, however, proposes an actor-oriented approach to identify and analyse the issue of child prostitution. The main reason for using this approach is because it allows the focus to be on the perspectives of the actors themselves. As this is what the thesis will be about, it seems to be the right approach for it. A favourable aspect of this approach is the focus on and interest in demonstrating divergent reactions to similar structural circumstances (Long, 2003). Different responses to one situation are thus partly the collective formation of the actors themselves. Social actors need to be represented as active participants whose needs, interests, values and motives should be studied and taken into consideration. This perspective enables one to focus on action at the level of the actors. It pays less attention to the working of structures, yet highlights the significance of interaction and communication and the way these might aggregate to higher level social outcomes and structures (Little, 2014). It posits that each individual has his or her own goals, ambitions and interests, and look at individual interactions between people, preferences and their struggle for power (de Vries, 2010). The other three theories that I have shortly touched upon above are not suited for this thesis because they do not look at the points of view of the actors themselves. Rather they talk about the actors; an approach that would not be useful in my thesis.

In my thesis I will address questions such as: ‘‘Who are the actors involved in child prostitution and what is their role?’’. Above all, I wonder about the various perspectives that prevail around the topic by different actors involved. By different actors involved I refer to actors who are directly connected to the industry of child prostitution, such as the children, their parents and perpetrators. Not every actor is to the same extent included in the literature, but a broad overview can hopefully still be generated. Moreover, I would like to include actors such as the media who *get* involved in the topic. By analyzing the latter my aim is then to posit different perspectives alongside each other. With these objectives in mind I formulated the following research question:

Research question: <i>What are the perspectives of actors involved in child prostitution in Asia?</i>
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Sub questions:

- *Who are the actors involved and what role do they play?*
- *What are the perspectives of the different actors involved in child prostitution?*
- *How can one understand these different perspectives?*

In order to answer this research question it is necessary to know who the actors are and what roles they fulfil. Different categories of actors and their characteristics will be elaborated on and occasionally some background information regarding the topic will be given. The answers on this first sub question will be discussed in the second chapter that is followed by the third chapter which includes the perspectives of the actors who have been exemplified in the first chapter. The different perspectives will shed light on the viewpoints that can prevail around this topic by different actors. Finally, in chapter four I will examine the question: ‘How can one understand these different perspectives?’.

2. Who are all the actors involved, and what role do they play?

The children, their family and community, governments, media, NGOs, clients, and others who profit from child prostitution are the actors that will be discussed in this first chapter.

2.1 The children

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 is the first legally compelled, international treaty that safeguards minors from sexual exploitation. By 1990 this convention was signed by over 150 states. It has defined a '*child*' as a person under the age of 18, unless state law recognizes a different age of majority (Pledger-Fonte, 2012). The 48th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1992 includes that '*child prostitution*' is referring to the sexual exploitation of a child for remuneration in cash or in kind, usually but not always organized by an intermediary (the parents of the child for instance) (Bhargava, 2003). The notion of prostitution usually implies that there is some element of choice. However, the reality of child prostitution is moderately different. Child prostitution can be distinguished from sexual abuse, such as molestation or incest, because it involves commercial exploitation; monetary advantages in exchange for sexual activities (Willis & Levy, 2002). Prostitution also should not be confused with sex trafficking. The latter can be defined in various ways but all include the elements of coercion, forced labour and slavery. More specifically, children who are trafficking may find themselves involved in prostitution, pornography, child labour, domestic servitude, debt bondage, street begging, drug trafficking, service in armed conflicts, illegal adoptions, and organ trafficking (Bang, Baker, Carpinteri, & Van Hasselt, 2013, p. 17). Prostitution includes the selling of sexual activities but this is not necessarily with coercion or without consent (Butcher, 2003). These concepts get merged frequently and therefore the agency of sex workers gets overlooked. While prostitution implies that they have some choice while trafficking usually takes place as a result of coercion. With regard to children this aspect of agency might not always be at stake but it is important to mention at least. The sexual exploitation of children takes place in many countries in a diversity of forms. Several Asian countries appear to be considerably vulnerable to child prostitution. Among these countries are Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and India.

So what children fall at risk for ending up in prostitution? First of all, prostitution as a global growing industry involves both young boys and girls. Too often boys are not mentioned in the literature or in the media when in reality they are also subjected to child prostitution and they need the same kinds of protection as girls (Mikhail, 2002). Most of the children are younger than 16 years old and although some countries have mainly young boys working as prostitutes, most remain to be female. Sri Lanka is such a country offering almost exclusively boy prostitutes; roughly all the country's 20.000-30.000 child prostitutes consist of boys (Sachs, 1994). The majority of the children originally come from rural areas of severe

poverty in Southeast Asia. There is no single clear-cut cause of prostitution as causes might differ between and among different countries, communities and cultures. Motives and socio-economic backgrounds of the children and actors who might have pushed them into prostitution can vary as well. In a developed country like the United Kingdom, an unhappy childhood and a broken family can result in children running away, ending up in the streets where they are exposed to alcohol and drugs and moreover vulnerable and likely to become a prostitute (Cusick, 2002). For them a lack of money can also be an issue but for less wealthy countries poverty is seen as the major factor contributing to children being vulnerable for sexual exploitation.

This is also the case in Asian countries. Here children turn to prostitution because a scarcity of better choices available forces them to this. The scope of the causes of the problem in Cambodia for example is tremendous. Poverty entailed that children have been witnessed in fights with dogs in dumping grounds over leftover foods. Children that have been interviewed in research projects had developed illnesses, were underfed and had fleas while others had visible and open wounds on their bodies (Blackburn et al., 2010). These children rarely received any form of medical care. In situations where vulnerable and socially excluded children lack opportunities, prostitution is lurking. Birth order and coming from a family that is poorly educated can also be factors that can easily lead children into situations of prostitution (Blackburn et al., 2010). It is likely that the oldest daughter is hold responsible for contributing to the household, while the youngest child may enrol in school because her older sister worked as a prostitute to pay for her tuition fees. Theoretically these children have the possibility to attend school because usually they 'work' in the night, however in practice this is rather difficult for multiple reasons (Mikhail, 2002). There can however be groups of children, for instance those who live along the Thai border, who lost or just do not have their birth certificates and therefore cannot enrol school or obtain legal employment as these are prerequisites for both (Lau, 2008). Children who can enrol school often lack the energy and capacity that is indispensable for schoolwork. It is hard for children, not attending school therefore lacking the education, skills and support needed, to find opportunities and work outside of prostitution (Bang, Baker, Carpinteri, & Van Hasselt, 2013). Moreover, if the children would finish their compulsory schooling, Thai children, for instance, are still exposed to a gap of three years between the end of their obligatory schooling and legal entry into the job market which is between the ages of 12 and 15 (Lau, 2008). In Thailand differences prevail for boys and girls as for a young woman with little education there is no other way than prostitution to raise her standard of living, in contrast with young men who despite being poorly educated can still escape poverty and achieve honourable social status and economic security (Muecke, 1992). They can do this by joining the monkhood or the military. In a country like Thailand work many non-Thai young girls who have been recruited from neighbouring countries and hill tribes in Northern Thailand. Again, poverty and vulnerability of the children and their families are the most striking factors causing this.

Different situations are possible for children to end up in prostitution. Parents can 'sell' their children into prostitution knowing what is going to happen with them. In some cases girls are being taken away by child traffickers who convince the parents that their child will work in a

beach restaurant in exchange for a financial compensation. The question remains if these parents really have no clue where their child will end up. Montgomery (2010), who has done fieldwork regarding child prostitution in Thailand for many years, argues that parents often are aware of this. When children have been sold or debt-bonded into brothels by their parents they have to stay there a certain period of time until they have ‘repaid’ what has been paid for them initially. It can take three to four years before the children have worked off the amount of money that is paid to their parents. This debt bondage is considered as part of an ancient practice (Blackburn et al., 2010). When the child arrives at the brothel it is almost immediately clear that escaping will not be an option and that even the police can conspire with the brothel owner to keep the children there (ABC-USA, 2014). Those children who have contracted sexually transmitted diseases sometimes get to return home before the period of time of three to four years has been reached however when they do they are likely to spread the diseases they contracted. The conditions in brothels are often not very good. It was in a brothel in Phuket in 1984 when five young prostitutes were killed in a fire as they were unable to escape because they were chained to their beds (H. Montgomery, 2009). This horrific tragedy illustrates how horrible the conditions in these brothels can be. Another category of children includes them who have run away from home where they might have experienced neglect, abuse or intolerable circumstances and then are lured into prostitution without realising the danger they are in (Finkelhor & Korbin, 1988). Young prostitutes can also live on the streets with peers where they engage in sexual activities when the opportunity arises. Furthermore, child prostitution can be a matter of family trade where children still live at home and sell their bodies as part of the household economy (H. Montgomery, 2010). If it concerns children who are finding themselves in the latter situation, it is common that no formal organisation for prostitution is present; children entered through the support and pressure by peers or older siblings (H. Montgomery, 2009). This situation describes what the actor-oriented approach tries to illustrate, namely that communication and interaction between actors can lead to a meaningful outcome, or action in this case. It is by encouragement of peers and others that children decide to enter the sex industry. As this section has been illustrating, different situations can be possible and several causes can be indicated but poverty is the main factor behind the vulnerability of families and their children in particular for them to end up in prostitution. The next section will be elaborating on the role that the family and community play in the engagement of children in prostitution.

2.2 The role of family and community

Muecke (1992) claims that child prostitution is violating traditional norms for parental care of children. However, it is not uncommon that in some parts of the world parents sell their children for a financial compensation. Although this is most likely done out of poverty, in any case parents have defaulted on their responsibilities. Frequently parents claim that they do not know where their children exactly will end up when arriving in the city; they honestly seem to believe a legitimate job is arranged for them. However, some parents who are aware of their children’s faith when selling them to brothel owners may do this so they can buy drugs or

electronic devices with the money they get in return (Berkman, 1996). Parents often escape their responsibility as situations like these are being portrayed as parents being naive, honestly believing their girls will get an ordinary, socially accepted job in the city. The role of the family is crucial in the induction of their children into prostitution. Asian parents are known for having great parental authority which could declare the phenomenon (Levan, 1993). Besides poverty there are other explanatory factors for parents pushing their children into prostitution but these will be elaborated in the next chapter. Not just parents but also village headmen and monks have been involved in the selling of children into prostitution (Muecke, 1992). They operate by disguising the actual intentions the parents have for their children. By taking this stance the people who should be the children's authority 'examples' are openly involved and harm moral codes of the familial as well as public domain (Muecke, 1992). Generally, it is the poverty of a community and the lack of resources that constitute a culture that forces these children into prostitution out of need.

2.3 Media, NGO's, and governments

The media is known for its great power to influence public opinion. In today's popular media information can be misused what leads to one side of the story being presented to the public. By leaving certain information out, as a result the media tends to focus upon just one side of the issue. As a citizen then, you have no influence on what news you are being exposed to, it is decided upon by others what part of the news issue is included or excluded. This is also the case for child prostitution. When one thinks of this phenomenon an association with sex tourism and Western men is quickly made. In the late 1980s child prostitution and sex tourism began to be topics on the agenda of many Western countries (Rosemberg & Andrade, 1999). 1979 Was the international year of the child, since this year new actors have entered the scene. Women's organizations have played a great role in advocating child rights since 1984. By means of welfare activities and statements in the press in both English and the local language these local women's organizations focused on child rights and their violation through prostitution. When we speak of Thailand, the latter topics were the organization's main focus points. For them prostitution is considered not as a gender issue, in contrast with their Western peers. Prostitution in Thailand by these local organizations is more seen as an outcome of poverty together with poor education as well as function of the selfishness of the actors who are behind selling and buying the girls into the industry of prostitution (Muecke, 1992). In other words, prostitution is framed in the context of problems a Third World country faces.

Intergovernmental organizations such as UNICEF, the UN and NGOs have been concerned with the issue as well. In the 1990s one of the most pressing concerns of the international NGO movement was indeed child prostitution and its linkage to sex tourism. Groups as ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) and ECTWT (Ecumenical Council on Third World Tourism) are behind the influential campaigns that targeted and drew links between child prostitution, tourism and child trafficking (H. Montgomery, 2009). These

campaigns included tragic stories about young girls whose lives had been ruined because Western men abused them and infected them with HIV. A typical storyline would be: ‘A young Thai girl from a poor family sold into a brothel by her parents where she gets raped frequently, having sexual intercourse with several foreign men each night to eventually be ‘saved’ by an organisation only to find out that she is HIV positive and dying’ (H. Montgomery, 2009, p. 1). This shocking news had affected the public and their consciousness big time. The focus on Western men by the media as the only conceivable category of clients of the girls is leaving out the possibility of local men visiting the prostitutes, a part which is either denied or not taken into account. This is problematic as research has pointed out that for instance in Thailand domestic use of prostitution among all classes of Thai male society (except for monks who follow celibacy) is common (Muecke, 1992). More about these clients will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Frequently certain information regarding the children is also missed out on by the media. Non-Thai children are disadvantaged over Thai children because they do not know the language (Muecke, 1992). Decisions are taken for them and they are in no way able to negotiate about any matter as they lack the required language skills. More recently, now advocating groups have brought the topic of child prostitution on the agenda, NGOs and human rights groups are more and more committed to uphold the rights of the child (Mikhail, 2002).

The role the government plays in the sex industry is rather controversial. The media detests sex tourism, organizations have campaigned against it but the governments do not seem to be on their side. The latter recognizes it as a business they can get benefits from. In both Cambodia and Thailand it is reported that each month the police receives sums of money from brothels in order for the brothels to be protected. Other cases have reported that the government, police and military owns some of these brothels which makes them part of the problem (Blackburn et al., 2010). Huge amounts of money are involved in this growing business of child prostitution and sex industry and as the former example illustrates, governments do not mind taking advantage of this. This aim becomes visible given the support sex tourism enjoys from governments. Enormous financial contributions are made to Asian economies that translate into economic progresses of their societies. Government officials deliberately do not contribute in combating prostitution when they agree to receive pay-offs to avoid imprisonment of prostitutes. Corruption is great in this context. In Thailand sex tourism has been introduced by the arrival of American soldiers during the Vietnam War. Before this period of time the amount of foreign men coming to this continent for sexual pleasure was significantly small. It was during the Vietnam war that an image of Thailand as a sexual paradise was created (H. Montgomery, 2008). Since then the sex industry became an organised business with brothels and bars just to serve the interests of foreigners. When the troops had left the country in 1975 the infrastructure for this sex industry was established. Thai women were stereotyped as beautiful and obedient who had a lot to offer besides paid sex. When the sex industry in Thailand was founded, the prime minister considered potential revenues of the industry of much greater concern than the position and safety of the young children that were involved in the industry (H. Montgomery, 2008).

An additional consequence of this new industry was the threat of AIDS that increased rapidly. Governments basically did not respond or respond late to this crisis that was and still is afflicting their countries (Leheny, 1995). Instead of acting to combat the crisis and the underlying cause of the phenomenon governments behaved passively. However, other research points out that although the government might not do anything about it, they at least link prostitutes to the rapid transmission of HIV (Muecke, 1992). Moreover, governments and officials can aggravate sex tourism and child prostitution by not fully enforcing laws which results in a continued exploitation taking place. Corruption, again, may also encourage any further exploitation.

2.4 Clients of the children and those profiting from prostitution and sex tourism

Earlier I have shortly touched upon the emergence of sex tourism on the Asian continent. The demand of foreign men for local prostitutes finds its origin in the presence of service men and soldiers during warzone. Individuals generally come from wealthy 'sending' countries and travel to poverty-stricken 'destination' countries, but individuals travelling within their own regions and countries is common, too (Newman, Holt, Rabun, Phillips, & Scott, 2011). As counts for the Philippines, most of these men are between 20 and 40 years old, followed by the category of individuals between 40 and 60 years old (Rialp, 1993). In this context of place, most men are either employed in the business sector or in the military. Sex tourism has close connections to child prostitution and is another aspect of the sexual exploitation of children. Since international travel has become easier, child prostitution has been able to find its way in this. Paedophilic Western men coming from the United States, Australia and North European countries often cannot go their way in their own country due to legal constraints so instead they go to countries where poor economic conditions enable child prostitution to take place (Finkelhor & Korbin, 1988). Attitudes and certain interests of men like these create markets in other countries for child prostitution in which their needs can more easily be fulfilled than in their home countries. The fact that child prostitution also in less developed countries is illegal is often forgotten. Perpetuators are not being stopped from their actions as the enforcement of laws remains very weak.

Other than paedophilic men there are males such as the Japanese who began coming to Thailand as sex tourists after women in Japan started to gain more political and economical rights. Opportunities for women expanded and suddenly Japanese women were able to exit the prostitution sector in their country. By the expansion of rights and possibilities, women were allowed to avoid the instability and risks that prostitution usually entails (Leheny, 1995). As the socio-economic position of Japan improved, the image of prostitution as employment got undervalued and stigmatized.. With Japan's demand for the Thai sex industry they rank second among foreign visitors in Thailand, after Malay men (Leheny, 1995).

If we focus on this category of sex tourists the first question that can be posed is what men fall into this category of sex tourists. Since determining what characteristics of men should be included and excluded in this definition is not an easy task, giving one clear definition can be problematic. What should these characteristics be based on? Is a sex tourist someone who travels abroad with the sole purpose of engaging in sexual activities as mentioned in the definition of Broughton? Or can this definition also be applicable for a business man who travels for the sake of business but who is having sex when the opportunity arises? And foreigners who stay in another country for a long period of time, could they qualify for the profile of sex tourist? Certain parts of Bangkok are designed as tourist attractions full of bars and sex shows (H. Montgomery, 2008). Could a backpacker roaming these streets be a potential sex tourist? As might be obvious, the line between these possible features of sex tourists is tenuous. Sex tourists are not a homogeneous group of people but can be of both sexes and from different classes and backgrounds with different motives and attitudes towards the commercial buying of sex (Lau, 2008). Some are willing to consider themselves as sex abusers whereas others are not.

The media together with campaigners on this topic are in particular focused on Western paedophiles (Ireland, 1993). Much attention has been paid to this group of visitors that has obsessive preferences and desires for engaging in sexual activities with young children. The third category after Western paedophiles and foreign tourists consist of local men. Although the emphasis is being put on the former two categories, most children are being exploited by extensive number of local men (Willis & Levy, 2002). Research conducted in countries such as the Philippines and Thailand indicate that children who work in the sex industry serve foreigners as well as locals and not just paedophiles (Ireland, 1993). The latter group of men is more attracted to younger children and thus not so much into teenagers who for our concern are nevertheless still considered as children according to the definition of child by The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Unknown is to what social classes members of this group of local men belong to. No data seem to exist on whether there is a relation between being a sex tourist or client and the societal class this person belongs to. Police, military and government officials are the layer of society that patronizes the sex service industry (Muecke, 1992).

Besides sex tourist there are other definitions with which one can be recognized: client or customer, offender and perpetrator. Throughout this paper I can refer to this same category of individuals by using different definitions. A further distinction can be made among those who sexually exploit children to better be able to analyse the situation. Two categories are suggested: 'preferential abusers' and 'situational abusers' (Ireland, 1993; Lau, 2008). The preferential abuser can be considered as the paedophile type of abuser, yet this definition would imply that those persons who have a preference for sexual engagement with post pubertal children are also included. They deliberately travel across borders to satisfy this need with children abroad (Bang et al., 2013). The situational abuser does unlike the preferential abuser not have an explicit preference for children. Having sex with minors is something that occurs but was not meant to happen from the beginning. These abusers do not have a true interest in children; they just have sex with them when the opportunity is being presented. A

variety of reasons can explain for the acts they engage in. Sometimes the person in question has a low self-esteem, and when their coping skills are poor too, children can replace a peer sexual partner that they actually prefer. In other situations abusers can be rather indifferent, their approach then is simply a 'why not?' behaviour (Ireland, 1993). Another may be interested in expanding his or her sexual horizon and therefore taking part in sexual activities with a minor (Bang et al., 2013). This idea can be emphasized by being an anonymous 'tourist' in another country than your own. The fear to be recognized is significantly small and for this reason it is likely individuals start to think and act more freely than how they are used to in their home country. As exemplified, several motives and preferences can underlie the act of sexually engaging with minors.

Aside from governments, perpetrators and in particular the children, there are other actors who profit from child prostitution and the sex industry. Muecke (1992) gives an extensive enumeration of these actors: pimps; procurers; owners of massage parlours; escort agencies; bars; brothels; taxi drivers; police and government officials. Pimps and procurers are also known as the vendor, owner or employer of the child. This party takes account of the capital, services and resources that constitute child prostitution to be a lucrative and feasible industry (Berkman, 1996). It is common that children work in bad living conditions and considering they are severely underpaid, they are denied an adequate share of the income they themselves have produced and thus have right to. The vendor usually receives the payment and by exploiting the children to this extent the vendor enables himself to maximize his own profits (Mikhail, 2002). The facilitator is the actor who often embodies the recruiter or the parent, and in some cases a motel owner who allows the activity to take place on his or her ground (Berkman, 1996). It is important to be aware of the fact that the various forms of prostitution in which the child is involved play a major role in what situation counts for each child. Living conditions may not be that bad if the child still lives with his or her parents. Also their wage is likely to be substantially higher as the perpetrator pays them directly rather than when a child works in a brothel; here the perpetrator is paying the brothel owner.

In many Asian nations the sex industry has established specific tourist areas that embrace foreigners or local citizens who seek sex. Svay Pak, a district of Phnom Penh, in Cambodia and Pattaya and certain parts of Bangkok in Thailand are infamous centres of child prostitution. These places are densely populated with massage parlours, bath houses and strip bars facilitating the demand of certain groups of people (Blackburn et al., 2010). On the one hand, these places reinforce that tourists come to Asia with having sex as their goal, but on the other hand the advent of tourists enable the child sex industry to flourish. A vicious circle of these processes is occurring here. Due to the extent of this industry excursions are being facilitated to realize the purpose of these tourists. In the 'sending' countries of the consumers advertisements can be found that are visibly marketed (Berkman, 1996). Moreover these sex tours are advertised with in travel journals, emphasizing the possibility to purchase sex with underage boys and girls in Asian countries. Through the Internet sex tourists can quickly and easily get in touch with peers whom they can exchange information and experiences with about matters such as where one should go to, how much one should pay and how good certain prostitutes are (Blackburn et al., 2010). The Internet as a medium is great in

facilitating the industry of sex tourism. This form of tourism has become such an organised business and brings great benefits not just to brothel owners and procurers but also to hotels, airline companies and travel groups (Huda, 2006). Moreover, the Asian sex industry is estimated to be worth billions of dollar on an annual base (Blackburn et al., 2010).

This chapter has elaborated various actors that are engaged in or involved with child prostitution. Some of their motives have been discussed and also the roles they play have been touched upon. In the following chapter I will focus more on the perspectives that these actors have on child prostitution. Questions such as: ‘What is the child’s say in the activities they perform?’ and ‘How do children view prostitution?’ will be answered. Factors like context and tradition will demonstrate how child prostitution in some countries and societies is exemplified and explained. ‘New’ views upon this topic from different actors will shed light on this topic.

3. What are the perspectives of the different actors involved in child prostitution?

This chapter will contain the different perspectives of the actors on child prostitution. Although research has not been conducted to the same extent on every actor, the available literature can still give us a decent overview on what perspectives among children and other actors can prevail on this topic. Furthermore this chapter will constitute the basis for the next chapter in which an understanding of the different perspectives will be discussed.

3.1 Perspectives of the children

Perspectives of the children themselves are rarely included in the existing literature on child prostitution. Little research has been done on in partnership with the children, asking them questions about their views on the selling and buying of sex and what definitions such as ‘exploitation’ and ‘prostitution’ implies for them. Nevertheless I wonder what perspective these minors have to the work they perform.

In the previous chapter the several motives, causes and situations possible for children to end up in prostitution have been discussed. A case study in the Philippines has reported that most children who are prostituting themselves do this in addition to their daily selling of wares in the street (Rialp, 1993). During the daytime they can be involved in selling candy, while during the evenings they are occupied with selling sexual activities. Half the amount of children went to school in addition to their working activities. As a result, children worked seven days a week at least eight hours a day and in many cases therefore got too little sleep. Other situations have illustrated that prostitution was simply an attempt to get away from an existence of poverty in which hard working jobs in bad conditions or begging were the standard. Prostitution, on the other hand, was a job that contrary to the former you could make bigger money with – usually five times as much as begging brought in (H. Montgomery, 2009). As choices were rather limited, the children have claimed that prostitution was a better alternative for them than begging. Thus, selling sex was an economic necessity as a result of other forms of labour being considered physically harmful and at the same time not profitable enough. A lack of other forms of well paid labour forced them into prostitution. However, the children themselves seemed to neglect the risks of prostitution that they were exposed to such as pregnancy or infections (H. Montgomery, 2009). Heather Montgomery’s case study in Thailand on child prostitution has indicated that the children did not use the term sex work, moreover they did not understand its meaning either. Although they fully understood the term prostitute, they would not define themselves as prostitutes, also the selling of sex was not considered a form of labour. They even would go as far as to deny that they were child prostitutes; the idea of being an individual who sells sex was being rejected (H. Montgomery, 2009).

So according to at least the Thai child informants they were not child prostitutes, nor were they child labourers. Instead, them being involved in sexual activities with customers in exchange for money or other wares was considered as part of wider patterns of social relationships (H. Montgomery, 2009). As will become clear later in the text, the social relationships both play a role in relation to their families and the clients.

There is a belief that prostitutes somehow must be able to get sexual satisfaction out of their job (Muecke, 1992). This belief is ambiguous when it concerns children because very young children do not have the same sense of sexuality and sexual satisfaction as adults. What counts to the children are family obligations that they are able to fulfil by means of prostituting. Later on in the paper these obligations will be elaborated. First I would like to focus on the way clients were being viewed by the children. Fieldwork in Thailand has revealed that there can be more to a child and his or her client than just a onetime sexual experience. Some European clients came back year after year to the same prostitute and had developed personal relationships with them and their families (H. Montgomery, 2009). When the foreign men were in their home countries they would still be sending money to the children's families in order for them to rebuild their houses, pay off debts or purchase electronic devices. As certain men kept coming to the children's habitats, the latter started to get used to their presence and appreciated the help that had been given to them. This familiarisation meant that certain men were now classified as guests or even friends rather than clients (H. Montgomery, 2010). Intimate moments with the 'guests' were not considered as work, nor as a form of exploitation. The exchange of money and sex should be understood as being part of an established relationship. In some cases the children would not even get paid for their sexual services, they would only receive and accept 'gifts' in the form of cash, toys, clothing or whatsoever. A price for the sexual activities was not set, neither did the children demand money. If children were 'lucky' they could in some occasions experience a trip to the cinema or a holiday at the beach in addition to gifts (Rialp, 1993). In this way clients gave the children a chance to stay in fancy hotels and eat well. Possibly due to these affairs the image of Western clients was rather positive. In comparison to local men prostitutes could enjoy more privileges; better conditions, more money or in this case gifts, more freedom of choice regarding clients and even having the choice to refuse a client (H. Montgomery, 2010). Generally clients are seen as kind and generous, but in some situations children have complained of the way they were treated. Several children have reported that they worked in conditions of virtual slavery. When in Cambodia a 15 year old girl was sold to a man by her parents for her virginity he drugged and raped her while she was unconscious. The girl then ended up in a brothel where she frequently was gang-raped and beaten, just like the other girls in the brothel (Undercover, 2014). Ultimately, the majority of the children assert that they both had good and bad experiences with clients. The situation as earlier described explains how by seeing the client as a friend the concept of sex work is being rejected in the context of maintaining a social relationship.

Interviews with young women who were in their twenties and had been child prostitutes before revealed that a commodification of certain parts of the body was taking place (Cohen, 1982). Body parts were for sale, it was as simple as that. Selling sex had apparently become

so ordinary that they could be cynical about it. The children themselves however would deny such commodification. These divergent ideas towards the selling of sex can be explained by the difference in age but it could also be that prostitutes only later on realized what the work they have performed for years actually entailed. In Phnom Penh, Cambodia, children as young as 7 or 8 years old would sell yum-yum i.e. oral sex to sex tourists for around \$30 US dollar whereas young girls of 16 years and older generally sold the same activity for \$2 (Blackburn et al., 2010). Full sexual intercourse would be sold by the latter group of children for \$5, having intercourse with the younger children however was a lot more costly. Virgin children were beloved and thus highly asked for which could increase the price to \$500. Prices and practices can change in and between countries. One occurrence described how when the virginity of a 14 year old girl was being sold for \$200, the event was widely celebrated - like a birthday party. This girl sold oral sex and did massage when she was younger but at this age she was deemed to be ready for the full intercourse. From the sum she received \$50 herself, moreover by this act her debt was being cleared (Blackburn et al., 2010). The girl herself declared that she was rather satisfied with the deal that was made for her by the madam of the brothel. This occurrence describes how 'special' selling one's virginity can be. The underlying reasons for why virginity is so much praised will be discussed in the section about clients in this chapter.

Uncertainty could prevail regarding the awareness of the children. How aware could they possibly be of the work they do at such a young age? One 15 year old female Thai informant described: 'At first I was very scared, but after a while I got used to it. None of the girls thought about running away because they came for the money, every one of them was there by necessity.' (Muecke, 1992, p. 6). Moreover, Muecke (1992) claims that child prostitutes are well aware of their contribution to tourism. They were very much conscious of the amount of money sex work with tourists brought into their country. It seemed they fully realized it was a business that both their country and they themselves could have the benefits of. Generally, women as well as children enjoy better working conditions with Western customers than with local men. They can exert more control over the former and they can earn more money (H. Montgomery, 2010). Informants have confessed that some aspects of their job they very much enjoyed. One girl responded: "I had a very good income, worked short hours, indoors, it wasn't hot, I could shop with my friends during the day, and my skin stayed white. I don't really think it was bad." (H. Montgomery, 2010, p. 14). This quote reveals that children can experience positive aspects of prostitution therefore considering prostitution an easier job that pays more than factory labour for instance. In line with the actor-oriented approach this quote also displays that social actors can have different thoughts than what often at first is assumed according to the one sided story the media presents. Furthermore, some girls justified being involved in prostitution because it was the least bad option. Nevertheless, dubiousness can prevail when trying to measure an accurate sense of awareness. As children can be as young as five years old, due to this often young age of children one can wonder to what extent they can be aware of the work they engage in. The capacity of some of them to analyse issues might be too limited. Although this scenario can be very likely, most children seem to be aware of what they are doing, as if the necessity to enter forces them to.

In Thailand concepts of obligation to one's family and gratitude are the standard. This issue will be discussed further in the following section but the main purpose is that children contribute financially as soon as they are able to. Providing financial support to parents is believed to be a child's duty considering that the parents have always taken care of the child (Lau, 2008). For some child prostitutes then, it is most important to help out their parents. Working and earning money is in this context about fulfilling family obligations rather than simply making money. A child's focus is subsequently not on prostitution or sexuality but on being loyal towards his or her family, to be contributing as much as they can. Berkman (1996) argues that children in prostitution are being prevented from making contributions to their communities because they are often deprived of education and living a lifestyle that psychologically and emotionally weighs heavily on them. Montgomery (2008, 2009, 2010; 2001), on the other hand, contradicts this view as she claims that children are good members of the community if they fulfil their familial duty. When informants had been asked whether they would quit their job in prostitution, most replied that they did not see themselves do this due to the height of their earnings. Interestingly they justify what they do on the basis of their peers doing it as well and the fact their family benefits from it (Rialp, 1993). Some findings suggest that children may gain a sense of affection and security through their activities which they would not experience without their job in prostitution. Others however, have admitted that their deepest desire was to finish their education so they could be doctors, lawyers or setting up their own businesses instead (Rialp, 1993).

A study conducted in Sri Lanka asked 145 school children for their points of views on sex and sexual exploitation. When these minors were asked on their attitudes regarding doing sexual acts with adults, the responses were almost all negative (Miles, 2000). Getting involved with adults was considered as something problematic, as if a child would sell its body for money. The latter was however reality. The child informants seemed very much aware of the effects sex with adults would entail for the children. Futures would be ruined, society would disown you, parents would be disappointed, HIV and other diseases could be contracted and so on. The children concluded that sex with adults is not done out of pleasure. The blame was put on the parents of the children who allowed them to be involved in sexual acts with grownups. Part of the solution the children proposed was creating alternative income for the parents so they would not have to rely so much on their children for money. On the other hand, on a question such as: 'Is it ok to have sex with peers?', children responded in a positive way (Miles, 2000). The majority had learned about sex through videos and magazines, just a few had been educated by their parents, however most of them wanted to receive more education on topics related to sex (Miles, 2000). The point of this research is that children had a very clear statement towards having sex with adults. Sex with adults is wrong, not done for pleasure and has to stop; they were very much aware of this.

This section about children has shown what points of view are constructed and thus how their perspective is being developed. They see prostitution as an attempt to get away from poverty or jobs in which they are worse off. Most important did the children consider to be dutiful to their parents by helping them out financially. Some children reject being a prostitute, others talked about their job as indifferent as selling body parts. It is suggested that most girls were

well aware of their contribution to tourism of which some did not think it was that bad of a job. There appear to be some aspects that children actually enjoy, mainly in assembly with Western men who treated them with luxuries. The focus for the child is on being loyal to one's parents, not on sexuality or prostitution. Although some claim to find prostitution the least bad option, children at a very young age possibly cannot fathom to what they are engaged in.

3.2 Perspective of family and community

As has been mentioned before, the parents of the children can play an influential role in the way of how children end up in prostitution. They can either be partly causing the issue as a tough childhood and a broken family life can make a child decide to go live in the street and earn some money by prostituting their body. Or they might be the ones who force their minors into prostitution by 'selling' them to brothel owners. Although it is more common for girls to end up in prostitution, it has been suggested that parents would prefer their sons being sexually exploited rather than their daughters because sons cannot get pregnant (Miles, 2000). This section will reveal the parents' perspective on their children prostituting themselves.

In Thailand it is of high importance to fulfil traditional obligations towards one's family. In Buddhism prostitution is deemed acceptable through the concept of karma and merit-making (Lau, 2008). This belief claims that through prostitution a girl can gain merit and thus by showing this gratitude and loyalty support her parents. Particularly in Northern Thailand this obligation to support your family is felt by many daughters (Lau, 2008). Especially females are the ones who have to take part in conserving the institutions of the family. This custom starts at a very young age, basically when a child is able to financially contribute to its family – in any way possible. In especially the rural parts of the country children were seen as an investment with an expected return in financial terms (H. Montgomery, 2010). It is considered the child's duty to contribute and support its parents and siblings as this is an extremely important and fundamental concept in Thai society. Then when they have started to contribute it is of high importance to remain loyal to their families thus to keep contributing in order to keep the traditional functions performed by sons and daughters intact (Muecke, 1992). The work being done can in some cases create a situation in which parents do not have to work anymore, moreover it can provide them with luxury goods like televisions that otherwise would be unattainable for an average poor family (Lau, 2008). Money was besides a necessity also a mean to gain power and status. Having money, power and success made you a superior inhabitant of your community; one's socioeconomic position would increase, making you an important individual in many Asian societies. Muecke (1992) argues that while in the past it was the role of the mother to sell food so family needs could be met, these days it is the task of the daughter to meet these needs but since ways to do so are limited children are steered into selling their bodies. To safeguard the family ties it is common that female relatives work for instance in the same brothel. More social support was provided if sisters and cousins

worked in the same brothel where their presence was made a bit more bearable due to the company of relatives.

The communities where the children come from are to a high extent dependent on the earnings generated through prostitution. Income from the children empowers the communities where they origin from to maintain (H. Montgomery, 2009). Some parents have justified the preceding by claiming the following: ‘The problem is not that our daughter sells her body, it is that we have no food to eat.’ (Montgomery, 2010, p. 14). This expression illustrates that parents are so desperate as they lack a good financial basis that even in some scenarios there might be not enough food on the table each night to provide all family members with the recommended daily amount of intake of food. It seems that where other options are lacking, decisions are made on behalf of the family despite whether this is right or wrong for the child’s sake. The fact that a child in most Asian countries is protected by the law from sexual commercial exploitation is not taken into account by one’s parents and/or community.

Furthermore, some parents have claimed that prostitution in the long run is not essentially harming their children, nor their mental health (H. Montgomery, 2010). They did not believe sexual acts taking place in a period of time of only one hour could inflict any damage to a child. Although this certainly can be argued, cases are known of women who had returned to their villages when they were in their twenties after years of prostituting. They were not necessarily all traumatized to an extent to where they could not function well and contribute to society anymore. As long as a prostitute had saved enough money there were opportunities and a life ahead of them. For the parents it was rather influential whether children succeeded at their job or not. Success was measured in the money that had been earned and in goods this money had provided them with. Parents would consider their children to have ‘failed’ when they did not bring in enough money; it was a lack of success that caused a possible negative outlook on prostitutes and their families (H. Montgomery, 2010). When former child prostitutes would return to their homes in the villages often a lot had changed for them. They find themselves being caught in an identity crisis; as they had lived in the city for such a long time coming back to where they came from was not an easy task. Lacking sufficient education, having a history as a prostitute, moving away from your family at a young age; all these factors make it hard for them to form a true identity and a sense of belonging (H. K. Montgomery, 2001).

Likewise the children who still lived at home, their parents saw clients as guests or friends rather than solely clients of their children or strangers. Although other people might argue these clients do nothing but harm, to the family of the child the client was very kind, helpful and after all a source of income; they would never testify against them (H. Montgomery, 2010). Where relationships were established and protection was provided, families had no reason or wish for getting rid of their ‘guests’.

It should be noted that the concept of sexuality has a different meaning in many Asian societies than it has in the Western world. In the West many have an understanding of sexuality as something that belongs to the private spheres and although in a country like the

Netherlands where prostitution is legal and regulated, it is considered a deviant sexuality since it is public and not private. In Thailand for instance this distinction is blurred, females know that the value of their sexuality is not very high, moreover according to Buddhism sexuality should be controlled by others. As a wife you do not have sex with any other man than your own husband. The sexual needs of men have first priority, yet a Thai wife is expected to remain sexually passive, after all her mission is to sexually please her husband and to reproduce herself (H. K. Montgomery, 2001). Prostitution is also seen as a necessity to meet the need of men who do not have a wife. Basically if a woman commits adultery it is a total shame and reason for divorce, but if a man does the same thing it is considered completely normal (H. K. Montgomery, 2001). For Thai men it is also of high importance that women are virgin before marriage. Child prostitutes do not focus much on their own sexuality. To them this notion is rather meaningless as being loyal to their family is that what counts most.

The perspective of the parents on child prostitution can be viewed within facets of poverty, tradition, the desire for consumer goods, and in some cases the wish for power and status. These aspects underlie the decision of parents to sell their children or simply allow them to be prostituting themselves. Prostitution is a means to quickly make money favoured by many parents whose options in life are limited but who still want to take part in the upcoming consumerist culture in times of globalization is (Lau, 2008). Not always do they seem to be aware of the damage prostitution can cause, neither do they see clients as perpetrators or bad persons. Moreover, sexuality implies a different meaning and understanding in the East than in the West.

3.3 Perspectives of governments, media, and NGOs

Since the 1960s international tourism has grown rapidly, also in Southeast Asia. The links between child prostitution and sex tourism are enormous. The demand for minors coming from developed Western countries has increased and as a result ‘job’ opportunities in cities and places known for sex tourism have been created. Governments saw tourism as a means to boost their economies therefore have promoted and invested heavily to keep fuelling this industry. Annually tourism brings an influx of billions of dollars in the region; it is estimated that yet in 1998 in Thailand alone 4 billion dollar flourished in the country thanks to tourism (Wouk, 2014). The promotion and investment by governments in this industry contributed to the sex industries in the region. In most Asian countries prostitution is prohibited by law, but in several countries prostitution is tacitly accepted and tolerated as it is deeply ingrained in its societies. This manifests itself in both Thailand and Cambodia where although government officials disavow sex tourists, it is evident that prostitution is deeply rooted in their national identities (Blackburn et al., 2010). Sometimes police can be part of the problem as they are bribed to keep silent as well as to offer protection to brothel owners. Finally, both sex tourism and child prostitution are for developing countries a profitable source of income. The perspective of governments on sex tourism and child prostitution is solely illustrated in terms

of the revenues the industry creates. Other aspects of the business do not seem to receive much attention from governments (Bang et al., 2013).

In addition to governments, local media also tend to view prostitution primarily in terms of its contributions to the local economy as well as the tourist industry (Muecke, 1992). The main focus of international media is on the victimization of minors by the sex industry in which foreign men play the bad guys. The media rationalizes prostitution by claiming that the high prevalence can be attributed to the demand by men from other countries in combination with local rural poverty and the lure of consumer goods (Muecke, 1992). Left out from this created image is the role that local men play in prostitution. In reality most clients are from local or regional origin making the exclusive focus on Western men irrelevant.

Several NGOs, organisations and also academic supporters have expressed their dissatisfaction with the stigmatised word prostitute and instead prefer the definition of sex worker. Changing the definition by itself would already assign sex workers more rights. These advocates reject the notion of a prostitute as an exploited victim and rather emphasizes aspects of control and agency (H. Montgomery, 2009). This idea is applicable solely on adolescent prostitutes as for children no such arguments are prevailing in the literature. Activists and scholars argue that such a discussion regarding agency should not apply to children involved in prostitution.

While NGOs express discontent with prostitution, governments view child prostitution as being needed because it is good for national economies of countries that are not fully developed yet. Dissatisfaction may prevail, but in the end the financial benefits the industry entails have higher values than the negative effects it may imply on the children at stake.

3.4 Perspective of clients

Perspectives of clients on child prostitution focus mainly on the aspect of desire, from which they look at the phenomenon. Several practices have to do with this. Although very little interviews have been held with clients and thus a lack of reliable evidence is missing, an overview can still be given of the features and characteristics that are found attractive in prostitutes from several Asian countries. In addition to these characteristics this paragraph will contain the various motives clients can have for preferring a child prostitute over a prostitute who is 18 years or older.

Asian women are traditionally known for their caring behaviour and attitude of subservience. Clients who come from outside Asia go to this continent where they are exposed to cheap accommodation, food, and sexual services. The economic conditions and often weak enforcement of the law render individuals to go to Asian countries where they can acquire access to minors in ways that deem to be impossible in the countries they come from

(Finkelhor & Korbin, 1988). It also helps that sex tourists are more anonymous in the countries they go to than they would be in their home countries; this sense of anonymity frees the sex tourist from moral restraints (Lau, 2008).

Asian prostitutes are seen as presenting themselves as caring and serving which most likely leads to a flattering of the male ego whose desires are being fulfilled. It is suggested that through the Asian eyes of the prostitute her Western aging, bald client can feel young and sexy again (Wouk, 2014). Local advertisements targeting sex tourists saying 'Come to Thailand where all your fantasies will be made come true.' are contributing to this feeling implied on Westerners by local girls. Sex tourists are not a homogeneous group of people and not every client of an underage child is by definition a paedophile. The latter group of clients often have their eyes on children in a particular age category but are in numbers relatively small compared to the group of men who have sexual intercourse with prostitutes who are younger than 18 years old. The sex industry in Thailand is very much focused on selling juvenility, prostitutes therefore are supposed to look young and innocent but while many Thai girls already look younger than they actually are and they may lie about this, problems arise as often the real age of the prostitute is not known by its client (H. Montgomery, 2008). In some situations clients are ignorant about whether they have sex with an adult prostitute of 20 years old or a child prostitute of 16 years old. Thus, with the exception of a small group of the so called preferential abusers (paedophiles), the preference for youth and innocence is a major issue, whereas age is not. These tourists do not concern themselves with age; instead they are attracted to loyalty, innocence, youth and affection (H. Montgomery, 2008).

Another category of individuals do explicitly favour young children. Markets for young children are being created because there is a demand coming from Western societies where some attach a certain meaning to having sex with young children while some explicitly favour children who are virgins (Finkelhor & Korbin, 1988). In certain cultures elsewhere in the world there are myths that legitimize the engagement in sexual activities with children. A common belief is that having sex with young virgin girls can prevent men from contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS or even cure them. Moreover these cultural myths involve the belief of men that having sex with a young girl increases their sense of masculinity and improves their health (Humanium, 2014). However, reality proves that this belief is utterly false as the risk of transmission of STDs only increases rather than decreases, thus sex with children does not imply safer sex. It is estimated that in Cambodia in 2007 between 4.000 and 5.000 children up to 14 years old and between 63.000 and 80.000 children aged 15 and older were living with HIV (Blackburn et al., 2010). Others perform sexual acts with minors thinking it will lead to male longevity, a belief which is completely mistaken, too (Berkman, 1996). To meet the existing demand for young children many bars in Thai sex tourism areas advertise with their dancers as them being 'fresh' and 'very young' (H. Montgomery, 2010). Other advertisements claim to have virgins for sale.

Other than these so called cultural beliefs there are financial considerations involved in the decision clients make to have sex with children. Although having sex with a virgin girl can be very costly, generally it is cheaper to have sex with a child than with a grown-up. It should be

noted that not in or even within every Asian country this is the case. Child prostitutes can be obtained easily as well as for a low price because they lack the sense of awareness of the price of their own sexuality therefore will sell themselves for a cigarette (H. Montgomery, 2010). As the child is often poor, vulnerable and marginalized, the perpetrator starts to feel like he can exercise power over him or her, power that otherwise is not available to them. In Thai brothels there are many young girls from Burma working selling sex for a low price to often migrants coming from their own country. Foreigners usually have a bigger budget and can opt for an adult woman, but migrants from Burma were poor themselves therefore picking a young girl to have sex with was better affordable (H. Montgomery, 2010). In the first section of this chapter Blackburn (2010) has claimed that certain sexual acts can be purchased for less with older children than younger children.

Another belief is that because sex with child prostitutes is widely available, such behaviour is then culturally accepted. As well is being suggested that tourists having sex as their main goal assume child prostitution was there before they even came, claiming the industry survives without them (Lau, 2008). To reason in this way keeps them in denial of their own blame to the existence of the sex industry. Lastly, there is a category of clients who are just curious to child prostitutes seeing intercourse with them as something new and exciting. In short, many male clients are attracted to the characteristics of Asian women such as juvenility and the way they behave. One category of clients is interested in children because they are children, another opts for sex with child prostitutes because it can be cheaper and there is a belief that contracting STDs can be prevented or cured. The perspective of clients is constructed by the values they attach to children. The next chapter will shed light on how the different perspectives on child prostitution can be understood.

4. How can one understand these different perspectives?

This final sub question enables one to analyze how different perspectives of different actors can be understood in different terms.

4.1 How can child prostitution be understood?

There are several aspects to child prostitution that make why children (are forced to) engage in it and at the same time declare how this can be understood. As is already being described in the previous chapter, in Thailand Montgomery (2009) came across child prostitutes who rejected to be prostitutes. Engaging in sexual activities with ‘friends’, thus clients, was done in the interest of sustaining social relationships that they and their families had with the men. Moreover, sex was not considered a form of labour. This could have something to do with the fact that frequently children did not set a price for sex, were not paid in cash, but rather in the form of gifts. This is very important in the effort to understand what drives children into prostitution. As an outsider you need to know what is behind child prostitution to not immediately judge from a Western perspective, claiming that everything about child prostitution is utterly wrong. Besides this aspect of denial it is very important for children that they can contribute to the welfare of their family in the form of preventing a younger sister to turn to prostitution or to pay for medical bills of relatives, even enabling parents only have to plant one rice crop a year instead of more to be financially self-sufficient. By prostituting, children allow their siblings and parents to be slightly better off than in some cases they are. A daughter prostituting herself can spare her parents from work and provide her family with consumer goods that without her doing this form of labour could not be purchased (Muecke, 1992). For people from regions on earth that are less well off, prostitution is often a necessity, and not a choice. This scene of reality can be hard to grasp for someone coming from a developed country who can call him or her lucky to not be in this position.

When looking at the family of the prostitute, prostitution should be understood as a way of fulfilling obligations towards them. To remain loyal, obedient and grateful towards one’s parents was considered the most important within one’s family. Children saw and understood prostitution through the cultural reference points of duty and obligation (H. Montgomery, 2010). In several studies conducted in Thailand it is suggested that sex work is being justified by the children for it supports their families in several ways but predominantly it conserves conservation of the children’s families and homes. When daughters earned enough money and were successful in their sex career then what they did was also justified by their parents, who as long as they were provided with the necessary attributes such as money and consumer goods, welcomed their children back home. Only a lack of success was considered negatively.

Moreover it was simply a financial consideration. Many contemplate and make a well considered decision to enter prostitution purely on economic grounds. When a limited range

of options is presented to you and you can earn \$100 a night, why sweep floors or beg in the street and earn the same amount of money in a month (Butcher, 2003)?

That child prostitution can be analysed as a means to fulfil family obligations does not mean it should be condoned or seen as an inherent part of Thai culture that demands children to prostitute themselves (H. Montgomery, 2009). The International Labour Organization has recognized child prostitution as to be unacceptable and which should be suppressed.

4.2 Coexisting perspectives in practice

Beginning with the media, it does not always give the right information regarding child prostitution. Rarely is the full story taken into account and often it is the case that particular aspects of the issue are underplayed. As has been mentioned before, the focus is frequently put on Westerners while the discussion concerning the role of local men thus the indigenous market for children has been left out. Stories of children who managed to leave the prostitution sector successfully were missing, too (H. Montgomery, 2009).

The disposition of this last aspect is rather ambiguous. Child prostitutes encounter tremendous difficulties in changing their situation. Some want to run away and by showing remarkable strength they manage to escape while others show no interest in leaving their job (Mikhail, 2002). There are cases of women in their mid-twenties who successfully turned back home after many years of working as a prostitute. They did have a future ahead of them, were not so much traumatized and could work on that future with the money they had saved. However, others came back less fortunate, facing a future that is defined by severe social and economic vulnerability (Mikhail, 2002). Social vulnerability takes place when former child prostitutes are being exposed to community exclusion and/or physical threats. Economic vulnerability appears when there is a shortage of possibilities for the individual as being deprived of education increases difficulty in finding an alternative, good job (Mikhail, 2002).

On the other hand, instead of fleeing, young women and children may opt to stay in the position of being a prostitute because they feel responsible to work in order to support their families. Others stay as a result of fear for the threats of brothel owners; if they leave the brothel, something bad will happen to their family (Blackburn et al., 2010). Interviews held with NGO workers and both child and adult prostitutes have revealed that many (child) prostitutes who had been rescued during police raids have returned to the brothel of one's own free will (Blackburn et al., 2010). NGOs attempting to rescue girls often lack the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully counsel the victims or investigate situations of child prostitution. As a result, although they succeeded in rescuing the girls, they fail because the girls return to their former position as prostitute. Also, when NGOs are returning the children to their former homes, their parents are still indebted to agents and brothel owners, making it hard for the children to remain protected from being debt bonded again (H. Montgomery, 2010).

Different perspectives can exist alongside each other. One may think that prostitution is all bad while others think beyond this and develop other viewpoints. This section is on the effects of child prostitution that can take various forms. Berkman's (1996) perspective is negative and he argues that the consequences of a lifestyle of a prostitute are devastating, both physically and psychologically. Easily they can contract diseases, only if they are on the edge of dying they get medical care, they live in fear to get beaten by pimps and so on. Moreover, the loss of one's adolescence, having forced sexual relations, and the denial of freedom and personal development can cause these negative psychological and emotional effects to a child (Mikhail, 2002). Walker (2002) claims that it is a tragedy for any minor to get involved in prostitution. Being exposed to assault and abuse can result in a threat of a child's life and one's self-esteem, and childhood memories can be forever damaged. On the other hand, although laws on the illegality of prostitution are existent, the enforcement of the latter remains weak. Corruption is another impediment in stopping child prostitution from happening. National governments prefer the incoming money of the sex industry to the safety of its own young citizens. The problem lies both in the developing as well as developed countries where the offering of so called 'sex tours' should be eradicated. Child prostitution can only be erased if on both ends if serious action is being undertaken. International agreements are needed to curtail the problem but most of all there is demand for economic development as child prostitution remains to be seen as a mere result of poverty (Finkelhor & Korbin, 1988). Cusick (2002) then suggests to have alternatives available to ensure that the young prostitutes who want to escape, can escape. On the other hand, as examples from case studies by Montgomery have illustrated; there are aspects of prostitution that children enjoy, they earn a 'fair' amount of money and children feel good when they can contribute within their household. In short, different points of view of different actors prevail which illustrate that prostitution is not necessarily good or bad.

5. Conclusion

Actors that are involved in or with child prostitution are undoubtedly the children themselves, their parents, family, community, clients, brothel owners, police, procurers, NGOs, governments and the media. Asian child prostitutes often come from rural and poor areas and find themselves in a vulnerable position for they are poor and lacking education, skills and support. Causes of prostitution can differ between and among countries, communities and cultures but a major factor in explaining prostitution remains poverty. Mostly children turn to prostitution because a scarcity of better choices available forces them to. Children can end up in prostitution by being sold and debt bonded by their parents, children can be taken away by child traffickers, they can run away from home or it can be a matter of family trade where children still live at home. The role of the family is crucial in the induction of their children into prostitution, they are generally short on money and resources and see prostitution as a solution to this. NGOs do have child prostitution on their agenda's and several efforts have been made to combat the problem, but eliminating child prostitution is not an easy task. The media detests child prostitution and focuses mainly on Western sex tourists going to Asia for their sexual pleasures while governments are primarily concerned with the financial benefits prostitution entails for their own countries. Besides individuals from more wealthy countries, most clients remain to be local. Both categories are neither homogeneous, nor from the same class, nor having the same motives or attitudes. Clients differ as do their motivations for engaging in having sex with children; some have a low self-esteem and use children as a replacement for peers they actually wish for, some desire explicitly children, some are indifferent to who they have sex with as long as they have sex, while others opt for children because they are generally cheaper to have sex with.

From both the perspectives of children and their families, prostitution is a social and economic necessity that enables children to fulfil their familial duty and parents to buy consumer goods and other wares. There are children who reject being a prostitute and/or child labourer. These minors have been seeing their engagement in sexual activities with clients as being part of a social relationship with them. Having sex was part of time spent with 'guests' who treated them with gifts and trips, instead of money. Other ex child prostitutes openly spoke out that they sold body parts when they were younger. Informants have confessed that there were some aspects of prostitution that they very much enjoyed; a good income, short working hours and working indoors were considered as very positive. They justify their acts on grounds of contributing to the household and peers doing the same work. Commonly, children would stay working in the brothel even if they could leave, some voluntarily went back after they got freed during police raids. Others wish they could escape, but cannot, and even if they could, often there would be no fortunate future ahead of them. Parents justify prostitution on the same grounds as their daughters, and as long as they succeeded in their work they are satisfied, however parents would consider their children to have failed when they would not bring enough money in. Rarely were parents aware of the physical and psychological damage prostitution could inflict on their children, nor did they see clients as perpetrators or bad persons.

Governments tend to see the sex industry as a means to boost their economies; they do not care too much about the negative effects prostitution may imply on the children. The media leaves out certain information regarding child prostitution and NGOs make efforts, but are not able to cease child prostitution for the issue is too complex and the scope of the problem too large.

Clients attach meaning to loyalty, innocence and youth; characteristics that can be found in the caring petite Asian woman. Although the paedophilic category of customers explicitly prefers young children, the majority of clients is interested with these former characteristics, not necessarily with age. Nevertheless they can opt for sex with children because it is generally cheaper and in some countries and cultures there is a belief that sex with virgins can prevent them from contracting STDs or even cure them. Moreover, it would benefit their masculinity, would bring them luck and be good for their health.

To summarize, the perspective of children includes cultural reference points of duty and obligation. Most minors have a clear understanding of the need that requires them to prostitute, they want to please their family and have accepted fate as alternatives are very limited. The fact that some return to being a prostitute after they were rescued indicates that they have a good reason to stay. Poverty drives children and parents into thinking of prostitution as an alternative that entails advantages for the family. Families and communities view prostitution as a way to meet their (financial) interests. Perspectives of governments, brothel owners, and pimps view the act of prostitution as something they can get the financial benefits of. Clients praise the characteristics of Asian young women or children in particular and view child prostitution as a cheap and easy way to fulfil their sexual desires. The Western client who is portrayed by the media as the biggest perpetrator, often treats the child 'best'. The morality of child prostitution can be argued, however there are several sides to the issue, and hopefully the different actor perspectives in this thesis have demonstrated this.

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