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*Erasmus*

**Mongers, Trip Reports, and Representations of the  
Masculine (Self) of North American Sex Tourists to  
the Philippines in Online Communities**

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***Christiana (Ana) Fabregas***

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Members of the Examining Committee:

Dubravka Žarkov

Kathy Davis

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***Inquiries:***

**Postal address:**

Institute of Social Studies  
P.O. Box 29776  
2502 LT The Hague  
The Netherlands

**Location:**

Kortenaerkade 12  
2518 AX The Hague  
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

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## List of Acronyms

**GFE** – Girlfriend Experience; paid encounter is sexual but often involved emotional engagement and labour in the form of non-sexual conversation, flirting, spending non-sexual time together.

**GRO** - Guest Relations Officer, role of a woman working in one of the lady bars

**LBFM** - term for Filipino women, “Little Brown Fuck Machines”

**LBFM (PBR)** - term for Filipino Women, “Little Brown Fuck Machines (Powered By Rice)”

**PSE** – Pornstar Experience; highly and often purely sexual encounter with partners that are open to exploring a wide range of sexual acts

**P4P** – Pay for Play, a phrase used to describe transactional sex

**ST** – Short Time hire, maximum a few hours

**LT** - Long Time hire, often overnight or for multiple days

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## **Abstract**

Sex tourism is a captivating arena in which to examine men's performances and expressions of masculinity. North American men who travel to the Philippines for sex tourism have also found ways to further undergo constructing their masculinities in online communities where they and others can write and share 'trip reports,' or written accounts of their experiences for others to read and post comments on. This research examines the ways in which North American sex tourists – who specifically refer to themselves as 'mongers' – construct and perform their masculinities through the trip reports they write and self-publish to online sex tourism community forums. This study employed narrative analyses of twelve of these 'trip reports,' within theoretical frameworks considers theorizations on hegemonic masculinities and constructions of male sexual desire and behaviours.

This research's findings propose that through personal narratives, these men used both their mongering and the strategic retelling of their experiences to construct masculine identities through certain representations of Filipina women, themselves, and their interactions with other men. Positioning Filipina women as the consumable sexualized other allows men to occupy consumer and appraiser roles, the dichotomous masculine opposite. Representations of self provide space to exhibit their masculine abilities and expertise as a form of self-affirmation, and situate themselves within the online mongering community's masculine hierarchy. Overall, these men not only use their mongering to construct their masculinities, but their trip reports provide a way for them to bolster feelings of masculine achievement.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

Development studies of recent decades that take gender into consideration have primarily targeted women as subjects of research and academic focus. Women in developing countries then become the sole objects of gender-based policy prescriptions by virtue of their systematic oppression through patriarchy-influenced power structures, and development work continues to be reactionary with its lens of focus holds steadfastly on those burdened by those oppressive structures. This research endeavours to flip that lens and instead examine where transnational hegemonic masculinities, saturated in postcoloniality, is reproduced. North American sex tourism to the Philippines demonstrates this, and this research examines North American sex tourists or 'mongers' who benefit from the continuation of unequal geopolitical and gender-based systems of oppression, and the ways they perpetuate the systems from which they benefit at individual and community-based levels through the trip reports they write and share in online communities.

## **Keywords**

Men, masculinities, gender, sex tourism, 'mongering', online community, Philippines, North America, personal narratives

# Chapter 1 : Introduction

## **1.1 Statement of the Research Problem**

This research is concerned with North American masculine identities as constructed by sex tourists to the Philippines through stories they tell of their experiences in online sex tourism community spaces. I am interested in the aspects of sex tourism to the Philippines that contributes to a North American man's understanding and perception of his masculinity, what contributes to their masculine identity, and how they represent their experiences as men while abroad in this specific context. Studies have been conducted looking at constructions of masculinity among North American sex tourists to countries like Mexico and Costa Rica, but I am interested in what draws them to the Philippines for sex tourism, and how that relates to their masculinity and how they choose to represent it.

## **1.2 Background: Philippine-American Military History and the R&R Sex Industry**

Although the United States was the last country to have official control over the Philippines, the Spanish empire ruled over the archipelago from the 1500s for approximately 300 years. Under Spanish rule the more than 7,000 islands was named "The Philippines" after the heir to the Spanish throne, Prince Phillip (Philippine-History.org 2018). Filipinos were converted to Catholicism, and remains one of Spain's longest lasting legacy: as of 2014, 81% of the Philippines is part of the Roman Catholic Church (Ericta and Collado 2014: 27).

By 1898 the United States had been increasingly supporting revolutions against the Spanish empire, breaking into the 10-week Spanish-American War. With the Treaty of Paris signed in December of 1898 ending the war, the Philippines was then subjected to American control. The U.S. established a military government in the Philippines days after capturing Manila, and in accordance with this treaty, the Philippines was officially ceded to the United States. Japan invaded the Philippines after their attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, taking control from the Americans until the end of World War II. Under Japanese occupation, many Filipina women were forced into sexual slavery as 'comfort women' for the occupying soldiers in towns and cities across the country.

After the United States invaded the Philippines in October 1944, they reclaimed control over the country and granted Philippine Independence in 1946. However, independence from official American control was not completely free of stipulations. The Military Bases Agreement that passed in March of 1947 permitted American military presence in the Philippines for approximately 100 years, two of the largest and most important bases being the Subic Bay Naval Base and the Clark Air Force Base. According to Zimelis (2009), "the bases contributed substantially to the Philippine economy," and the Philippines received approximately \$1 billion in US military and economic aid (60-61). Moreover, with the huge influx of US servicemen to the bases created an R&R economy in nearby cities for Americans to spend time and foreign currency while on leave. (Zimelis 2009: 61)

After Philippine independence, Santos (2015) references two national government administrations' responses to the sex industries that emerged within these R&R economies. Ferdinand Marcos' presidency from 1965-1986 upheld a pro-tourism platform that supported the sex industries drawing foreign currency to the Philippines, resulting in an increase in tourism, especially sex tourism. (Santos 2015: 13) The perceived threat of spreading communism in Southeast Asia and the U.S. entry into the Vietnam War also rapidly increased American military personnel in the Philippines, especially at the existing Subic Bay and Clark bases. (Santos 2015: 10) A. Lin Neumann (1987) says that in the 1970s, the Philippines saw an increase from 150,000 to over one million foreign tourists, and "an increase from 93 to 225 cocktail lounges in the Philippines." (182-183) Filipinas



found ways to best persuade US servicemen to keep spending money at bars and restaurants by emphasizing their femininity, sexuality, and perceived exoticism in order to “[make] the most of these employment opportunities by profiting monetarily... even though their jobs catered to the needs of their former colonizers, therefore extending US imperialism past its officially recognized end.” (Santos 2015: 11, 13) This substantial economic draw of foreign tourists posed Filipinas as patriotic citizens serving their country, a rhetoric that changed drastically with the fall of Marcos’ regime and the advent of President Corazon Aquino.

President Aquino, according to Santos “primarily concentrated on the betterment of the Philippine national image rather than the well-being of Pilipinas” (2015: 18). Police raids on Filipina entertainment establishments engaging in sex work were mandated, and many entertainment workers were arrested, “but rarely were any male pimps of clients arrested” (Santos 2015: 18). This ended up stigmatizing Filipina women both in the United States and the Philippines and further limited options for women to support themselves or their families. When AIDS came to the Philippines in 1987, Philippine nationalists blamed the exposure of Filipinos to AIDS on US servicemen, also bringing “a change to the US servicemen image that perceived them as unclean and dangerous,” but also further stigmatized Filipina sex workers as well. (Santos 2015: 20)

The Military Bases Agreement ended in 1991 and by 1992 the bases were officially decommissioned, though the lasting cultural legacies and economic-sexual stereotypes associated both with Filipina women and American men still remain. This military history between the Philippines and colonizing countries set the base for these culturally essentialized notions that I propose influence the modern-day sex tourism industry and sex tourists’ perceptions of the Philippines. These notions offer cultural scripts within which North American sex tourists can envision themselves that, when reinforced through the tourism industry implies a sense of imperial masculine power that is seemingly attainable.

### **1.3 Context: Sex Tourism, What is ‘Mongering’?**

The United Nations World Tourism Association defines sex tourism as,

“trips organized from within the tourism sector, or from outside this sector but using its structures and networks, with the primary purpose of effecting a commercial sexual relationship by the tourist with residents at the destination” (1995)

When looking for information and statistics of North American sex tourism to the Philippines or Southeast Asia in general, there is a wide array of data that focuses on child sex tourism (CST) in particular, which is a form of sexual exploitation that this research project is not focusing on. Literature on contemporary sex tourism to the Philippines is sparse, and there is even less that focuses on the demand side of this industry.

Sex work is still widely illegal across the United States (Nevada being the only state to have legalized some prostitution), and Canada has adopted an approach to sex work that is similar to the Nordic Model that criminalizes the buying of sex, though sex workers can still be subject to some penalties (Wingrove 2017). Though sex work is also officially illegal in the Philippines, weaker legal and enforcement institutions make it a widely-known practice in tourist hubs, which both providers and purchasers of paid sexual encounters rely on.

This research will focus on North American (primarily American and one Canadian) men who engage in sex tourism to Southeast Asia, specifically the Philippines.

The Philippines is one of the top-listed countries for sex tourism, along with Thailand and Cambodia when speaking about the Southeast Asian context. The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction says, “many countries that are popular destinations for sex tourists are underdeveloped or developing nations, where the cost of sex is much lower than in Western countries” (Yates, 2016).

According to accounts on the websites accessed for this research, sex tourists refer to themselves as ‘mongers’ and their varying approaches to seeking out, negotiating, paying for sex, then writing and sharing their experiences if they choose to broadly as ‘mongering’. Likely derived from the term whoremonger meaning “a person who has dealings with prostitutes, especially a promiscuous man,” (*Oxford Dictionary 2018*), the online sex tourism communities have adapted the term while adopting it as their collective identifier. Moreover, Cabezas (2004) complicates a singular understanding of sex tourism as, “more than an illicit activity... it is a contingent and open-ended activity whose blurred boundaries are intertwined with elements of romance, leisure, consumption, travel, and marriage.” (993) Therefore, I will use this phrase in reference to the sex tourists whose accounts I analyze, and their activities they describe in order to specify the context in which I examine and write, the activities that these mongers describe themselves.

The mongers examined in this paper are all from North America so must fly to the Philippines and then take ground transportation (taxis or bus) to Angeles City, Olongapo, or Manila, stay for a pre-determined period of time, and leave to return home. In these cities are “walking streets” or areas designed to cater to sex tourists, there are two main spaces where mongers can typically find women to hire for sex. The most popular mongering sites within these cities are the “lady bars” that line the walking streets of areas designated to cater to these specific international tourists. Lady bars are bars geared towards men looking for women to hire for paid sexual encounters. They often have a stage or area for dancing, seating available, a stocked bar, and generally dark lighting. Though lady bars most are open and busiest at night, some bars are open 24 hours a day, or are specifically daytime bars – all with women working as door girls, waitresses, dancers, or “Guest Relations Officers” inside and are usually all available to hire for sex.

The process of hiring women at these bars can be relatively straightforward. Mongers can approach or be approached by a woman that catches his attention and offer to buy her a “lady drink” which is often double the price of a normal drink in order to speak with her and capture her attention for a short period of time. During this time the two can flirt and oftentimes explore physical boundaries, and he can proposition her for sex. They’ll often negotiate things like how long he’d like her to stay (Short Time being a few hours, Long Time lasting into the following morning) and what sexual acts he wants to engage in. When they come to an agreement he will then offer to “barfine” her or pay her “EWR,” or Early Work Release. (Bangkokpartier 2018, psychman 2013) Either way, that fee is a set amount of money paid to the bar allowing her to leave before the end of her shift because she was hired for sex. Although the bar collects this money, a percentage does go to the women hired, so mongers are not officially required to pay the women they barfine anything beyond a tip when she leaves and/or cover the cost of her transportation costs home or back to the bar.

While this is the most widely-practiced form of mongering, some accounts examined in this research also highlighted practices including paying women to travel with them as they visit tourist sights across the Philippines, or going to more expensive, upscale establishments with luxurious rooms to rent on an hourly basis and a ‘showroom’ of women with numbers on them that customers can select for sex. Payment can be in the form of direct cash, but also mongers can buy gifts or clothing for the women they are with, or give them money specifically to send to their families.

#### **1.4 Research Questions and Sub-Questions**

In what ways does the practice of recounting their experiences of sex tourism to the Philippines contribute to male North American sex tourists' constructions and performances of their masculinities?

- (a) What are their conceptions of Filipina women as the sexualized Other and how does that inform their masculine identities?
- (b) What do men use in their narratives as a means of representing and constructing themselves as masculine?
  - a. How do they construct themselves as masculine in their narratives in relation to women?
  - b. How do they construct themselves as masculine in their narratives in relation to other men?
- (c) How do men interact with the online sex tourism community through their trip reports, and what implications do they hold for their masculine identities?
- (d) What cultural, geopolitical, racial, and socio-historical scripts are used and reaffirmed through these narrative representations?

## Chapter 2 : Methodology and Data Collection

### 2.1 Methodology

The above research questions emerged out of my curiosity about why men would seek out these online communities to share stories and experiences of their sex tourism, and my fascination with the effort and detail put into the trip reports that they write.

My first level of analysis was a thematic analysis wherein I categorized aspects of each trip report based on representations of men and women in ways that corresponded with my research questions. Within each of these themes my analysis was also guided by Baumeister and Neumann's (1994) work on personal narrative analysis, I examined if and how these narratives worked as "a means, a tool, for achieving a particular effect on the [reader]." (680) In particular, I found relevant the four ways in which they propose people use narratives to create meaning from experiences: to obtain rewards for themselves by maximizing other's perceptions of them through strategic narrative choices; to find external validation for their identity claims as people may, "not feel that they completely hold these identities until their claims attain social reality by virtue of being recognized and accepted by other people"; to pass along information; and to attract other people. (Baumeister and Neumann 1994: 680) I also considered different theoretical positions on personal narrative analysis as overviewed by Langellier (1989) especially their utility as a storytelling performance and as a social process as "...personal narrative research defines what a personal narrative is and what a good story is. How stories are told... and what a story does and whose interest it serves." (271) This informed my example selections within the three central themes of how men represented Filipina women, how they represented themselves, and how they interacted with their readership and online sex tourism communities through their trip reports.

### 2.2 Sources, Sites, Trip Reports

Of the numerous websites dedicated to sex tourism to the Philippines, I selected three popular sites for this research. I chose these websites based on how readily available they were to find based on simple search engine inputs including "sex tourism," "Philippines," "forum," etc. Though men that are experienced in sex tourism may already know which websites would best suit their interest, I felt like men that were curious but less well-versed with online information sources on sex tourism would use similar search terms. These online communities, like others on the internet, have developed an extensive list of acronyms that they reference throughout their posts. In some parts of the following chapters those acronyms will be unpacked for the sake of analysis, but others can be found in the above List of Acronyms.

Philippines-addicts.com is a forum specifically for and about sex tourism to the Philippines and the primary source for trip reports referenced in this research. On the site there are multiple topics for discussion from general travel advice, to warnings about scams or the latest law enforcement raid in a popular mongering area. One of the most popular sections is for "trip reports" where users can write and submit stories about their trips to the Philippines and the sex they had while there. Posts range in great variation in terms of detail and length, and some post pictures along with their stories. People without accounts can access certain topics, but in order to access topics like the trip reports one must make an email-verified account. In creating the account, users agree to the community codes of conduct and guidelines, which includes a warning that it's a male-only community and that women will be immediately banned. Other things that might lead to

banning includes posting pictures or references of a sexual nature with anyone under the age of 18 years in order to ensure that conversations are about encounters between consenting adults.

Mongertravels.com is also a sex tourism blog and forum that is not specifically dedicated to a specific mongering destination. Blog posts are readily available to read and are mostly written by two users going by the usernames of “Spanky” and “BigDaddy”. Though not as plentiful or with as much active user engagement as Philippines-Addicts.com, trip reports can also be found on this website’s forum section, and there are specific boards dedicated to different sex tourism locations across the world. Reports specifically on travel to the Philippines are not as popular as reports to other countries in Southeast Asia, or other destinations around the world, but posts by users *psychman* (2013) and *PaulyVegas* (2014) are examined in this research.

DreamHolidayAsia.com is an online blog written by a man named Rocco and is dedicated to offering advice and stories about ‘picking up’ women and mongering in and around primarily Southeast Asia. This website includes specific destination guides for countries like the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Cambodia and posts on why Asian women are a “dream” and holidays there are incomparable to men looking to find connection with beautiful women. The majority of his blog posts are about advice for potential mongers or advertising for these destinations to readers who might be interested in mongering but not have experience, but there is a specific post dedicated to a trip report from when a client of his named Chris was in Angeles City which will be used for this research.

From these sites I then decided to focus on trip reports compared to other discussion topics for multiple reasons. Trip reports provide personal accounts of sex tourist’s experiences in a narrative form where users often provide day-by-day accounts of their time while in the Philippines. Men can remain anonymous through their online usernames, making them feel safer to disclose information that they may not otherwise share in an interview style of data collection, especially with a young female researcher such as myself. Within the forums there is a specific section dedicated to trip reports where users can read, comment on, or post their own reports. Though not thematically-organized beyond being the designated space for these reports, these anonymous posters were able to share as much or as little information as they chose to. Finally, Philippines-Addicts.com offered internal search filters that allowed me to see the level of online engagement each post had, revealing that some reports ranged into the tens of thousands of views and hundreds of replies from other members of the online communities. On the forums as a whole, the most popular trip report has approximately 50,000 views and more than 1,000 replies. Of the selected narratives, user *Big\_B*’s post has the highest amount of online engagement, with 45,233 views and 652 replies. These forums on Philippines-Addicts.com and MongerTravels.com are not region-specific in regards to where their male members come from, so my selection process involved making sure that the trip reports selected came from North American men.

### **2.3 Challenges Within the Research Process**

The methods initially proposed in earlier stages of research depended primarily on online interviews I was intending to conduct with mongers that are engaged with these online communities. My first approach was to make accounts on Philippines-Addicts.com and MongerTravels.com to gain access to a broader source of the information available, and reach out to members that fulfilled my criteria of interest (male, North American, had been on at least one mongering trip to the Philippines) via direct message. I then also created my own outreach post on Philippines-Addicts.com explaining my research interest and opened up a call for interviews, saying that anyone interested could message me directly and we could talk further there. Finally, I also signed up for DreamHolidayAsia’s

email list and sent Rocco weekly inquiry emails to see if he or anyone he might know would be interested in conducting an interview with me.

I got multiple responses on my outreach post, the majority of them not believing my legitimacy as a researcher, suspecting that I am in fact a woman and therefore ineligible to have an account on the forum, and threatening to report my account to the moderators to have me blocked off the website. Some of the users I reached out to directly were reservedly curious about my research but did not want to yet disclose contact information and insisted staying on the anonymous platform, which I did to build a rapport with them before moving to more personal forms of communication and interviewing. By the end of that week I was unable to access any part of Philippines-Addicts.com, as my membership had been deleted and my IP address blocked from everything on the website except for an error page. I had not received any response emails of interest to also pursue, so realized that a change in data collection methods was necessary in order to complete this research.

In retrospect, I believe that conducting a discourse analysis on men's trip reports was the best course of action to obtain data given the specifications of this research paper. Financial constraints made travel to the Philippines to conduct in-person interviews inaccessible, and my positioning as a young female researcher could have made it hard for potential online interview respondents comfortable divulging sensitive information to someone that might seem unrelatable without investing significant time to build a solid rapport with enough interested respondents to collect data.

## **2.4 Methods**

I conducted this research by performing a narrative analysis on 12 trip reports from the three above sources, all of which were of varying length. I chose these twelve accounts based on the poster's identity as a North American man, and by the amount of views each post had, some of the most popular having more than 80,000 views and hundreds of comments and replies.

I used narrative analysis to conduct this research. Carr (2010) argues that narrations are valuable because they allow researchers to understand how participants understand and communicate their experiences within larger power dynamics between the Global North and Global South, and that development workers can find valuable insights through narratives as they provide, "a means of better decentring [of] these relations and [create] spaces for participation." (221, 223) From a feminist development perspective, I believe in men's ability to participate in critically engaging with patriarchal structures that lead to their own feelings of disenfranchisement even in light of their comparative benefits based on multitudes of intersections, and the means through which their actions within these dynamics affect others. Johnstone (2001) explains an approach to analyzing narratives where analysts remain cognizant of how "stories perform social actions" and audiences are implicated in that action indirectly or directly. (640) This research seeks to examine how North American sex tourists' trip reports perform the social action of gendering each writer, affirming their masculinities in certain ways, and counteracting certain aspects of their subjectivities that may diminish their masculine representation of self.

## **2.5 'Sex Tourism' vs. 'Mongering' and Word Selection**

For the men writing and presumably reading these trip reports in the hundreds, if not thousands, the term "mongering" is a specific application of sex tourism. In the case of these trip reports it includes the intention and ability to amass the highest amount of sexual partners while on their trips, and otherwise engage in behaviours that would create

opportunities for them to brag about to fellow men vis-à-vis their written reports afterwards.

Therefore, throughout the following chapters I will be referring to each sex tourist who wrote a trip report that was analysed for this research as a 'monger' and also use the term 'monger' when referring to any specific actions or behaviours that are specifically related to these men, or the online communities they contribute to in these reports. Any reference to more general aspects of sex tourism will be referred to as such, in order to maintain specificity in situating these men within the larger cultural phenomenon and industry of sex tourism.

## Chapter 3 : Theoretical Conversations

Chapter Three overviews pertinent research and theoretical conversations that greatly contribute to the theoretical understanding and framework my research employs. In over-viewing these sources I also provide the aspects of each scholar's arguments that I will use to theoretically frame my analysis.

### 3.1 Talking About Sex Tourism

Yasmina Katsulis' (2012) "Living Like a King": Conspicuous Consumption, Virtual Communities, and the Social Construction of Paid Sexual Encounters by U.S. Sex Tourists" examines online interactions between sex tourists on forum websites where they share experiences, impressions, recommendations, and advice about sex tourism to Tijuana, Mexico. She classifies sex tourism as a form of consumption intended to be masculinizing and demonstrative of one's worth and social value that "enables the cultivation, and experience, of a particular form of subjectivity that relies upon (and exploits) historical differences in power and privilege." (Katsulis 2010:210, 223) Through these online interactions, sex tourists "create a complex, gendered subjectivity that is continually reimagined and reinscribed, as well as construct a set of shared meanings related to paid encounters." (Katsulis 2010: 210) This article notes contradictions that exist within this gendered subjectivity, primarily the conflicting desire to sexually objectify and be objectified, the search for intimacy, and the power associated with comparative wealth and feelings of being financially 'exploited' as foreigners because of it. Moreover, a recurring theme on this forum was the sexual 'othering' of Latina women especially in comparison to American women where hypersexuality is naturalized, that serves as a means of moral justification for sex tourists. (Katsulis 2010: 216) My research will explore further these gendered subjectivities cultivated in sex tourism and examine the cultural scripts that dictate the North American sexual 'othering' of Filipinas in particular.

Through ethnographic study and interviews with European and North American sex tourists and 'sexpatriates' (or Western expatriates now living in the Dominican Republic and that not only partake but also facilitate the local sex industry) Julia O'Connell Davidson (2001) how sex tourism acts as a means for men to reclaim a lost sense of sovereignty and selfhood that have been ingrained as their 'natural right' through classical liberal political and social constructs. The article links Western male sex tourists' sexual desires to "... a set of political discontents with contemporary 'civilization'" and how their ability to sexually objectify Dominican women as Others allows them to feel fulfilled in ways rooted in white supremacy and traditional male domination over women and their surroundings. (O'Connell Davidson 2001: 6) This article explores ways that men foster senses of community through sharing and facilitating these experiences of this specific form of masculine affirmation, and engages with the contradictory nature of their classically liberal worldview in the context of a globalized world.

Megan Rivers-Moore (2012) looks at how globalization has led to a shift in masculinities for North American men of less dominant classes and socioeconomic standing, and how some have used sex tourism as a means of attaining these new versions of power accessible from imperial and hegemonic masculinity. (2012: 851) Through sex tourism, Rivers-Moore argues, "sex tourists have taken up a specifically transnational response to their experiences of disempowerment... and crossing borders allows them to claim a level of social status that would be unavailable to them at home." (2012: 866) The research conducted with North American sex tourists found that these tourists' descriptions of their experiences display a search for a masculine identity constructed in relation to not just the sex workers they hire but also the masculinities of fellow sex tourists and local Costa Ri-



can men. (Rivers-Moore 2012: 852) The author also says that sex tourism creates a ‘relational economy’ that produces both material and emotional value created through interactions with sex workers and other sex tourists. (Rivers-Moore 2012: 866) The fact that this article explicitly situates the majority of sex tourists into a non-dominant socioeconomic classes and uses that as a foundational reason behind men’s engagement in sex tourism and motivation behind their masculine identity construction is something I find compelling, and in this research will further explore ways in which men seek out feelings of masculine empowerment in their actions and the retelling of those behaviours.

### **3.2 Representation of Asian Women as Sexual Stereotypes**

This research also explores how Western representations of Asian, particularly Southeast Asian femininity create a specific set of stereotypical images. Tropes of Southeast Asian women as easily dominated and hypersexual, exotic objects for North American male consumption are deeply rooted in the colonial and imperial history of the United States and Southeast Asian countries, especially the Philippines. (Ralston 1998; Kwan 2002; Woan 2008) These stereotypes are pervasive across North American culture, with popular terms like ‘Gook fetish’ and ‘yellow fever’ upholding sexually based power dynamics as acceptable in ways that affect Asian and Asian-American women. (Zheng 2016) These stereotypes are integral for transnational constructions of North American men’s masculinities in the Philippines and elsewhere, because when Southeast Asian women become sexual objects to be consumed on a large scale, North American men become those consumers, both on an individual level but also as symbolic representations of their nations. (Ralston 1998; Woan 2008) Chapter 4 will explore how these stereotypes are used and reproduced in sex tourist’s trip reports in ways that speak to their masculinities.

### **3.3 Masculinities, Masculine Hierarchy, and Conceptualizing Male Desire**

R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt’s (2005) piece “Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept” responds to critiques of Connell’s original formulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in *Gender and Power* (1987). The authors uphold that certain aspects of the concept still hold true and applicable, such as the plurality of masculinities where some are more centrally positioned to exercise power, the hierarchical nature of those masculinities that is based on the subordination of non-dominant masculinities through hegemony, and the argument that hegemonic masculinity “works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity... symbol that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them.” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846) However, the authors agree with critical rejections of the original theory’s use of over-simplified explanations for the social relations that contribute to the creation of hegemonic masculinity, and also reject “the notion of masculinity as an assemblage of traits... [creating] a fixed character type.” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 846-847) In rejecting a single trait-based definition of hegemonic masculinity, the authors encourage analysis on local, regional, and global levels in order to understand the ways gender politics exist in any situation. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 849) This research will especially take into account the effects of transnationality as a colonial echo on the regional level since the sex tourism examined is between North America and the Philippines but is exercised through interpersonal social interactions that “exist within a cultural framework that may be materialized in daily practices and interactions.” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 850)

Michael S. Kimmel’s (2005) *Gender of Desire* is a collection of essays on male sexuality where he examines multiple aspects of the social constructions of masculinity, sexuality, and male sexual behaviour. This research draws on chapters from this book that look at constructions of male sexual fantasies, the dependence on heterosexuality as a tenant of North American hegemonic masculinity, and how men communicate about

their sexuality in ways that reveal cultural scripts deeply embedded into sexuality and masculinity. “Gendering Desire” co-authored with Rebecca F. Plante looks at how cultural scripts surrounding manhood deeply inform male sexuality, to the degree that “actually, thinking about sex at all seem to be a gendered activity” and how conceptualizing the gendered implications laden in understandings of sexuality underline inherent power dynamics between men and women but also amongst men as well. (Kimmel 2005: 7) “Pornography and Male Sexuality” engages with how pornographic images and male sexual fantasies reveal insights into “men’s relationships with sexuality, with women, and with each other.” (Kimmel 2005: 67) “Hard Issues and Soft Spots” co-authored with Jeffrey C Fracher explores how “gender becomes one of the key organizing principles of male sexuality, informing and structuring men’s sexual experiences” through multiple case studies of men dealing with various types of sexual concerns or dysfunctions. These three chapters provided theoretical insight to this research in demonstrating how deeply dependent hegemonic North American masculinity is on heterosexuality, and how that dependency necessitates specific sexual behaviour.

## Chapter 4 : Men's Portrayals of the Exotic, Erotic Filipina Woman

Before delving into how men write about themselves in their trip reports and how their interactions with the greater online community contribute to these mongers' masculinities, it is important to examine how their representations of women contribute to their own gendered self-representation. Inasmuch as "gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity," the ways in which men's representations of Filipina femininity reveal opportunities for them to assert their own North American masculinities in comparison. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 848) The highly heterosexual online spaces present and reinforce a duality linking femininity as embodied by Filipina women with the masculinity these North American men pursue through paid sexual encounters. This chapter explores how men's commentaries on the bodies, sexual skill, and attitudes of the Filipina women they have sex with have implications on how they characterize themselves as masculine.

### 4.1 Women's Bodies as a Consumable, Measurable Gauge of Masculine Success

Rubin (1975) looks at how women have historically been used objects through which men create social connection via sharing or trading in social configurations like marriage, kinship, or sex. In the context of this research, the way these men describe the local Filipina women they hire for sex becomes an integral component of their basis of connection in these online communities. The ways that those communities are further organized and facilitate gendered behaviour will be explored in Chapter 6, but first we must examine how and why Filipina women's bodies are described by the sex tourists in this research.

Many reports include the poster's description of ideal physical qualities they look for in the Filipinas they hire, often highlighting attributes that fit Orientalist perceptions of a hypersexualized Asian woman. Within the twelve narratives, multiple mongers use the term "spinners", to describe women that are under 5 feet tall and incredibly petite, their sexiness coming from their smallness of size (Bangkokpartier 2018, psychman 2013, LonelyTraveler 2018). It is women's Asian exoticness (even in the face of some posters' Asian-American identities) as exemplified by a small physical body type that is what these men claim makes them sexually alluring. This isn't an issue of someone as an individual being alluring and sexy in their body, but a sexualized generalization about a whole group of women from one country that can be overpowered financially, sexually, and at the most basic level, physically.

One poster described a woman "from one of the provinces [that] was one of the darkest girls I have ever seen, skin so black it nearlly [sic] shinned [sic], and the most amazing lips. That is what stood out for me, the most amazing sexy lips." (psychman 2013) Her exoticism is precisely the reason for his sexual attraction to her, emphasized by the details of her lips that suggests a sensuality that other women – especially white women – may not possess.

Beyond focusing on specific attributes of Filipina women's bodies, reports also repeatedly emphasized the amount of women they observed around them, in terms of numerical volume. One user *Briguy* explained, "there were lots of hot girls around" in any of the bars he went into, and the women particularly a freelance clubs are "ripe for the taking." *Shadow87* (2018), a first-time monger said that he felt like "a fat kid in a candy store" during his first walk around Angeles City, evoking an image for readers of delectable goods lined

up for greedy consumption, but of women instead of candy, and instead of hunger his masculine lust for sexual pleasure via these women's bodies. *Psychman* (2013) tells readers,

“... let's start with some basics. First, I was shocked, floored, blown away at how sexy and beautiful the women were. Now, that is not ALL the women, not by any means. The bottom half of women in the bars and on the street are very unattractive to me. I would say that 30 percent are cute. Ten percent are phucking [sic] hot, and ten percent the phucking [sic] charts sexy.” (2013)

These groups of women are implied to be so large that they can only be meaningfully represented in percentages based on common traits (in this case, their physical attractiveness).

If how “phucking [sic] hot” women are is the basis of their categorization to the mongering community, then it stands to reason that it too can be the community's basis of valuing individual women according to how sexually consumable their bodies are. Moreover, there is a common acronym throughout the websites used to refer to Filipina women in general (also as there is little distinction or interest in distinguishing between sex workers and not): “LBFM” or “LBFM(PBR)” standing for “Little Brown Fuck Machines”, or “Little Brown Fuck Machines (Powered By Rice)” respectively. (psychman 2013) This blatant sexual objectification reinforces stereotypes of the hyper-sexed Asian woman that, “is presented as the perfect complement to the exaggerated masculinity of the White Man, existing solely to serve men and be sexually consumed by them.” (Woan 2008: 279) I expand this argument to include that their perceived existence predicated on how consumable they are also dictates how and when they can be disposed of after they have been duly consumed. Representing Filipina women as easily consumed, readily available, hypersexualized objects allows mongers to then represent themselves in comparison as embodying an exaggerated White Imperialist masculinity and “a form of masculinized sexuality that might be inaccessible to them in their home culture.” (Katsulis 2010: 222)

Moreover, the gender ratios of mongering sites often featured significantly more women than men in bars or on the streets, women were repeatedly referred to as if they were a plentiful resource. Chris highly recommended a 24-hour bar because he said,

“I went there at all hours of the day and night, late at night I would find them sleeping on chairs and couches inside, the mamasang [sic] would wake them up I could pick whichever one I wanted to come back to my room for good sex.” (2015)

Therefore, he recommends this bar because of the plentiful, objectifiable, and consumable women he can access whenever he wants, even if they're sleeping. It embodies the Western sexual imperialism that existed under colonialism and the American military presence where, “In these contexts, Asian sex workers are registered and tagged like domestic pets, further relegating them to a less-than-human status.” (Woan 2008: 286) To readers, this image of a relatable man being able to walk into a bar, wake many women from their sleep just to select one and take her away for sex might sound like an impossible circumstance to find oneself in at home, but in the Philippines, this fantasy becomes an achievable reality.

In North American discourse, Filipina women have been historically represented as an embodiment of the sexualized Orientalist stereotype where, “they express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.” (Woan 2008: 282) By virtue of these women being sex workers catering to foreign sex tourists, men are able to access their bodies in ways much more easily facilitated through the globalized sex industry. These mongers' purchasing power grants them access to these bodies, yes, but when expressed in narrative stories they get to compose and post themselves, how they achieve

that access gets diminished in comparison to the reality that they have the ability to access these bodies at all. Instead, in exalting these women's bodies as fantastically feminine and consequently hypersexual, they uphold a duality then allows men to position themselves as equally hypermasculine and hypersexual in their ability to consume these women's bodies. This duality shepherds Filipina women and North American men into directly opposing gendered camps, the only commonality between the two being heterosexuality. It therefore echoes a North American "Military Man" masculinity through which according to Ralston (1998), "the act of prostituted sex is an act of both definition and domination for the 'Military Man'..." where he, "enforces/proves his masculinity, literally and within the context of the Asian Pacific woman's ultra-femininity." (685)

#### **4.2 Sexual Skill as an Indicator of Feminine Value**

Alongside commentary on Filipina women's bodies in the mongers' narratives the types of sexual experiences they provide these is also frequently mentioned. In these reports, a woman's perceived skill as a sex worker can positively or negatively influence a man's assessment of his paid sexual encounter with her and dictates how he represents her in his narrative. There are two main types of paid sexual encounters available to sex tourists; "Porn Star Experience", or "PSE" and "Girlfriend Experience," or GFE. A Girlfriend Experience involves a female sex worker treating a client like her boyfriend: "not a clock watcher, could kiss – treats you like her Boy Friend" according to a MongerTravels.com glossary page (2014). The same website defines PSE on the other hand as the, "opposite of GFE - professional attitude, clock watcher with perfect timing, but an incredibly good time." (MongerTravels.com 2014) Whether their paid sexual encounters fall clearly defined as a GFE or PSE, they generally frame the spectrum on which descriptions of the encounters fall.

*Shadow87* was surprised that one woman stood out compared to the rest. He referred to her as "J" and told his readers, "for the first time in my life after the 4<sup>th</sup> time [of having sex], [I] just wanted to be left alone to sleep." (2018) Her sexual drive seemed stronger than his, but he deemed that a very good thing. As her client, he is really in control of how much sex they have, what kind, and when, so he does not have to feel inadequate for not being able to sexually satisfy her. Instead, he views and presents her as an unlimited resource of sex for him, rather than something that challenges his masculinity. He ends up hiring her for the following few days, saying he's "never been treated as well as this girl's taken care of him" as though she fulfils his every desire without any expectation of reciprocation for him. (2018) Her embodiment of both a hypersexual woman and a dotting carer to him in their context of him being a consumer of paid sexual encounters legitimates the argument that, "[in hiring] this kind of gender work, customers create a living fantasy world where men are men, and women are women, and everyone knows their place." (Katsulis 2010: 216) He celebrates how she epitomized both key defining features of the PSE and GFE by providing a sexual experience that exceeded his expectations and also performing labour more reminiscent of unpaid intimate relationships through her care, both of which he reaps significant benefits from.

Based on these men's reports, a woman's sexual skill is often celebrated alongside her body, but noteworthy skill can also compensate for a comparative unattractiveness in the eyes of their clients. *BangkokPartier* spoke highly of one woman he saw at a bar and described as a "bad sexy bitch to go balls deep in" and then confirmed that he was right because, "she's fucking great in bed." (2018) *Big\_B* deemed one woman a "trooper" because she let him "explore all holes." (2013)

But women don't even have to be described as attractive to be consumable, as *Barhop-pingButterfly* described a "skank" he hired in the mid-morning as, "... big time damaged goods, but slim. Was fine for the time of day." (2018) Rather, these men explain how they

value these women they write about in terms of how fuckable they are; how easily they can be sexually consumed. These women's sexual skill proves in men's narratives that their utility as consumable sexual objects can be her most important aspect in relation to his life.

If these sex tourists hold so intensely to the idea that the Filipina women they encounter on their trip will be available for sexual consumption, then women that do not engage in sex with foreign tourists illicit negative reactions. *LoneleyTraveler* (2018) made clear in his trip report that women "not part of the p4p (pay for play) scene" in Angeles City "ruin the night time scene", especially when he just wants to barhop. This comment reveals how women that are not sexually available to him, either monetarily or conventionally, are not worth his time or attention to the point that he refers to them and speaks about these women with some hostility and blame for existing at all. Non-sex worker women may also remind him of the reality that Angeles City and the Philippines is not just a space that exists to fulfil his fantasies and provide him a good vacation experience, and that not all women here serve the sole purpose of fulfilling that sexual fantasy either. Ralston (1998) talks about the Western discourse of Asian women's existences being stereotypically entirely male-centred. She argues that for Asian women, the stereotype allows men to suspend the belief that, "whether she is serving him, seducing him, loving him or simply part of the context in which he acts, the key ingredient [to her existence] is the man, especially a white, Western man." (Ralston 2998: 688) When sex tourists remember that this stereotype is more indicative of reality than their expectation of Filipina women, men like *LoneleyTraveler* are forced to confront their suspended fantasies of their reasons for the Philippines and respond antagonistically as a means of trying to protect it instead. In this instance a Filipina woman's sexual skill is of no importance because he cannot access it and she thus serves him no purpose in his pursuit of sexual masculine fulfilment so instead resorts to dehumanizing language as a form of masculine dominance. Moreover, reading assertions like these within highly popular trip reports like this one reinforce these ideas to other men in the online community, allowing these stereotypes to continue and by extrapolation allowing this particular form of masculine construction to persist. Therefore, a woman's sexual skill as an

### **4.3 Women's Attitude as a 'Make or Break' Measure of Pleasure**

While a woman's body and sexual skill are key components of how these sex tourists portray them, a third aspect of men's perception, appraisal, and subsequent retelling of experiences he has with a woman is her demeanour or attitude. Based on the descriptions men offer of the women they interact with, her demeanour has the ability to either uphold or contradict certain assumptions he may have about her, thereby providing an opportunity for them to comment on their encounter and evaluate her femininity as he perceives it should be.

*PaulyVegas* (2014) wrote about one of his paid sexual encounters and reviewed the women saying, "they took berry berry good care of me," mocking the Filipino accent as heard by American ears when trying to say "very very". In the cheeky, teasing manner through which he emphasized the Filipina accent to his monger readership, he's posing Filipina women as less articulate than North Americans but uses a lighthearted appreciation for the service they provided to mask his assertion of racial superiority. A woman's demeanour can also garner a positive reaction to her client's perception of their interaction based on how she strategically subverts certain feminine gender norms. *Shadow87* (2018) called the woman he called "J" wild because "she started pointing out other women [at the bar] who gave the best blowjobs and stuff like that," so because she was able to know what he wanted in terms of sexual conquest and wasn't afraid of offering him opportunities to fulfil them. In doing this, "J" not only maintained stereotypical hypersexual understand-

ings of Filipina women to *Shadow*<sup>87</sup> but by providing recommendations for other women's sexual services, he interprets this as an ultimate embodiment of his ideal femininity – where her service to him and excitement to please demonstrably stretches beyond sexual skills or services she can provide.

However, inasmuch as a woman's enthusiastic approach to sex with these foreign men can be reflected positively in their trip reports, an attitude perceived as negative creates an opportunity for men to criticize her as a means of asserting his own manhood. One woman only referred to as "Irish" in user *Apostate's* (2018) post that he mentions seeing on multiple occasions and having penetrative sex with, but he found her disinterest in performing oral sex on him frustrating and disappointing. Eventually after seeing her a third time without a change in her boundary on oral sex, he called her "a PITA [pain in the ass]" and stopped seeing her by saying, "She was really cute though but as I posted earlier she wouldn't suck cock. So bye bye." (Apostate 2018) By mentioning how attractive she is he gives reason for seeing her more than once even though she would not fulfil one of his sexual desires, but her assertion of boundaries contradicted with what he expected from her. This exemplifies how even in spite of a woman fulfilling masculine expectations of beauty and sexual availability, her legitimate assertion of boundaries gets diminished into having a disappointing attitude and reflects negatively on a man's perception and subsequent retelling of his experiences with her.

Finally, these trip reports highlight how a woman's demeanour even outside immediately sexual contexts can affect how a man perceives and recounts her to readers in his report. *LoneleyTraveler* (2018) mentioned multiple times that for a woman he hired for multiple days her "next best quality after sex" is that she is not picky about the food she eats, and "TBH [to be honest] I think she is quite uncomfortable to eat in a formal dining arrangement." (2018) This not only reminds him that he's thereby not only more financially powerful, but of a significantly higher class than her too, simply by virtue of being comfortable at a normal restaurant environment. This reinforces an idea of a "Third World Woman," impoverished and less cultured thus more valued by her sensuality or what she can offer sexually (O'Connell Davidson 2001) . *Apostate* (2018) recounts a time when one of the women he hired asked to have the coffee sachets that were offered in his room, which, "made me remember how poor some of these girls are and indeed she had seemed genuinely excited at earning 1000 peso so quickly." (2018) The effects of a woman's demeanour on her client's perception of her evidently extends past approaches to sex, and still serves to feed a masculine understanding of self that these men are recounting through their stories.

Overall, the way men represent Filipina women in their trip reports reveals different ways that they perceive and present themselves as masculine. Aspects of Filipina physicality are presented as simultaneously exotic and erotic, and this then allows mongers to place themselves in the position to embody American imperialists, the G.I. sex consumers, and the Western benefactors of the past and present whose small monetary contributions seemingly have a huge impact on the lives of poor but sexy Filipinas. The way these men evaluate Filipina women in terms of their sexual skill legitimizes foreign men as sexual consumers of what becomes presented as a plentiful Philippine resource, and a woman's attitude has the ability to either reinforce or challenge expectations that men may have had about Filipinas. As these reports are written by and for men in these online mongering platforms, it is important to remember that this research focuses on how men are representing these women to fellow men, so these voices reflect a particular bias with the intention to maximize a certain set of masculine traits.

## Chapter 5 : Mongers and Masculine Self-Representation Online

This chapter explores how men represent themselves within their own narratives, and deconstructs how these particular types of self-representation contribute to how they construct their masculinities. Baumeister and Neuman (1994) argue, “people may be driven to construct stories that bolster their self-worth or, perhaps even more important, defuse potential threats to their self-worth.” (686) As these narratives and the mongering they are about are both masculinizing practices, these mongers’ self-representations are a way to fuse together both actions to construct their masculine identities.

### **5.1 Who and Why? Men’s Self-Identifications as Reason for Mongering**

When going into the archives of available trip reports to select the sample used for this research, the only explicitly intended aspect of a poster’s identity that I pursued was that they were from either the United States or Canada – especially as these online spaces were assumed to be all-male. As I continued to read through and select these accounts specifically, I came to notice variations in other intersections of identity including age, race, and socio-economic status. What captured my attention specifically was how and why men on a platform where posters self-disclose whatever they choose to share and keep private, would mention particular aspects about themselves in the context of their mongering in the Philippines.

*PaulyVegas*, a 55 year-old experienced monger, goes into some detail about himself and his life when not in the Philippines.

“Just not a great time to be a teacher in America. Constant stress of getting class assignments, of getting those classes filled, of not being able to run somewhere else to get employed. Sure, the stock market is up, housing is rebounding... what the fuck that’s got to do with my life, I know not. Time’s is tough.” (2014)

The stresses of dealing with job security in middle-age while being aware of an improving national market that he’s not personally experiencing the benefits of is causing him distress.

*Big\_B* identifies himself as an American 47 year-old retiree who had served in the military for 21 years and is now on a fixed income. At that age he’s deemed himself “on the wrong side of the hill to garner interest from most things I’d like to fuck.” (2013) In saying this, he implies that it is because of his fixed income and age that have rendered him grossly unattractive in comparison to the type of women at home that he would like to attract.

*BetterThanGod2* says that at 33 he’s going through, “my first mid-life crisis.” (2018) He explains that within the past few years he’s entered into his thirties, has been “enjoying my newfound place in middle management,” and has gotten married. From the reader’s perspective, it seems as though he has been able to achieve the typical markers of success and fulfilment: marriage, economic security, and relative comfort in his life. And yet explains, “I look cool, calm, and collected to the outside observer but inside, I’m screaming in angst as time slips through my fingers like grains of fine sand.” (2018)

All of these men highlight in their descriptions of themselves an aspect of something their lives that they are unhappy about or feel unfulfilled in. Originally created by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), the theory of Intersectionality gives explanation for understanding the multi-faceted forms of oppression that one may be subjected to based on different as-



pects of their identity and how that affects one's lived experiences. Through this lens, one can also examine different axes of privilege, or of varied experiences of oppression within an experience of systemic privilege. Coston and Kimmel (2012) look at the different privileges and oppressions that men may experience based on different intersections as, "among members of one privileged class, other mechanisms of marginalization may mute or reduce privilege based on another status" to refute the idea of, "a universal and dichotomous understanding of privilege: one rather has it or one does not." (109, 97) The information shared in these reports illustrates how even though these men on a grander, structural level are afforded many benefits by virtue of being (mostly white), North American men with some access to disposable income, there are still a number of ways in which each man feels disempowered in their lives.

*PaulyVegas*, *BetterThanGod2* and *Big\_B* may not be considered working-class in the sense of having jobs "that require less formal education... sometimes less skill, and often low pay" (Coston and Kimmel 2012: 107), yet their middle-class jobs still lead to them feeling like either they're not enough, or their lives are not fulfilling enough. Though they are part of a slightly elevated class, the nature of a teaching, military, or mid-management jobs still operate under the neoliberal logistics that affect working-class men, "...not only in terms of the privilege and enablement they have been historically and still are socially afforded, but also in terms of their experiencing intensifications in political alienations and economic exploitation at the same time." (Gahman 2018: 259) Coston and Kimmel (2012) also reflect on the paradoxical nature of masculine stereotypes of different classes, "if the stereotypic construction of masculinity among the working class celebrates their physical virtues, it also problematizes their masculinity by imagining them as dumb brutes." (107) So too then, can middle-class men be considered physically, intellectually, financially, and even sexually mediocre within a complexly gendered hierarchy that demands competitive exceptionalism in all aspects.

Jackson (2011) notes that with higher numbers of middle-class women pursuing higher education, the increased feminist gains from recent decades, and the resultant higher ages of women getting married and starting families, "middle-class heterosexual women are more able to flout convention without attracting moral opprobrium." (17) With women today being more able to reject traditional expectations of marriage and femininity without risking social exclusion, their expectations for partners would may also adjust and exceed what these men are willing or able to provide, leaving men like *Big\_B* with misogynist viewpoints a fixed income, and feeling undesirable.

Of the users who explicitly disclosed their ages at the time of posting, *BriGuy* and *Bangkokpartier* said that they were 58, *Big\_B* was 47, *keoan2009* is in his "early 20s", *Shadow87* was 30, and *BetterThanGod2* was 33. Therefore, the range of ages in this sample therefore spans almost 4 decades. The age of these mongers and their disclosure of it interests me, because that offers both potential insight into their reasons behind mongering if not explicitly stated, but also provides some context for other details disclosed like the use of Viagra or sexual-performance enhancing drugs, and certain physical descriptions.

Whether it's their age, stressful economic situation, or a feeling of being unfulfilled in spite of traditional markers of success, each man who divulges information about themselves does so as a way to explain, either implicitly or explicitly, why they seek out the escape of their reality via sex tourism. In pursuit of achieving a way to counteract a sense of masculine deficit in their North American lives, these men view and use sex tourism as a way to fulfil a sense of gendered power they feel entitled to.

## **5.2 Sexual Performance as Masculine Performance**

A central topic of these reports is the sex each man had with Filipina women. What I found fascinating while reading these posts however is that the descriptions of their sexual acts served as the implicit purpose of being a self-affirming masculine performance. Heterosexuality and sexual success within heterosexual pursuits is a central trait in the process of achieving and maintaining a normative North American masculinity, something that the mongering process facilitates and makes more accessible. In an essay about the constructions of male fantasy, Kimmel and Plante (2005) say, “If men translated their fantasies into behaviours, then they would want highly sexual encounters with active and skilled women, without always requiring an emotional, relational, context.” (63) This may be the appeal for sex work, but especially these men’s mongering when compounded with pervasive sexual imperialist discourses on Asian women and countries, further strengthened by disenfranchised-feeling men longing for a form of escapism. Kimmel and Fracher (2005) further argues, “sexuality is less the product of biological drives than of a socialization process,” and that sexual behaviour “becomes the vehicle for expressing the needs of social roles.” (141) This section will explore specifically how the mongers’ represent their sexual performance as the central way in which they perform their gender.

For some mongers, descriptions of their sexual performance go specifically un-recounted in their reports. For example, when it comes to describing any sex he has with the women he hires, *BarhoppingButterfly* (2018) clearly states that that information is private and tells readers to “use your imagination... not keen on writing on the details.” *BriGuy* (2018) also does not go into detail about his sexual encounters himself, only using terms like “things got frisky,” or “got things going” only for the immediately following sentence to indicate that she left. This vague acknowledgement of sexual activity may be a poster’s attempts to maintain privacy, but when so many other aspects of their sex tourist experience are detailed in their posts and these men can maintain anonymity online, it may be more indicative of emotional detachment that men have been socialized to adopt in relation to sexual acts. There is more attention given to detailing the process of finding a sexual partner than there is of what they do sexually once she has been hired.

In part of his report, *Apostate* makes clear to readers that he hired and brought home two women from a bar while recounting one night in Angeles City. However, once they are in his hotel room the only thing he says about their sexual encounter was that “they were both showered and both duly fucked.” He offers no further description of any sexual acts, and instead made it sound like the sex he had with these women was a task to be completed and a duty to fulfil. *Psychman* too tells a story about one of his sexual experiences as,

“We Phuck, rest, Phuck again... she has this wide eyed look and says to me ‘You are breaking my pu\*sy!!’ Being the gentleman I am I start to slow down- she says, I swear to god, ‘It okay to break my pu\*sy! Break my pu\*sy!!’” (2013)

This is in line with Kimmel and Fracher’s findings that,

“men use the language of work as metaphors for sexual conduct – ‘getting the job done,’ ‘performing well,’ achieving orgasm’ – illustrates more than a passing interest in turning everything into a job whose performance can be evaluated...” (2005: 144)

Experiencing physical pleasure is not credited as noteworthy in these trip reports, and the gendered fulfilment that comes with sexual success is considered achieved through this perception of sexual conduct as work.

*BarboppingButterfly*, *Briguy*, and *Apostate* rely on readers to assume the sexual encounter was enjoyable and pleasurable, and yet sometimes the only way they indicated experiencing pleasure was by mentioning their orgasm. *LonelyTraveler*, *BangkokPartier*, *Apostate*, and *psychman* all used the term “popped” to indicate their orgasm or ejaculation in descriptions of their sexual activity. *Briguy* and *BetterThanGod2* used the terms “shot my load” and “exploded” to refer to their respective orgasms and ejaculations. Posters also frequently use the term “finish” to indicate both orgasm/ejaculation and the end of their sexual encounter. Kimmel reflects on men’s focus on orgasm as the objective of sexual activity because of those work metaphors through which men are taught to apply when conceptualizing, practicing, or recounting sexual behaviour. (2005: 6) In the context of the sex industry and the transactional nature of these paid sexual encounters, focusing solely on their own male orgasm also continually asserts their importance and power in these sexual situations, prioritizing their desires over anything else.

There are some instances however where the poster describes the efforts he takes to engage in sexual practices that are generally considered to be primarily serving female pleasure, especially oral sex. “DATY,” or “dining at the ‘Y’” is a term used within the mongering communities examined in this research to denote cunnilingus, with ‘y’ suggesting the shape at the junction at a woman’s pubic area and upper thighs. *Kroan2009* uses the term to explain to readers that he performed cunnilingus on the woman he had sex with that night, even though “I don’t usually kiss or engage in oral sex, at least here in the Philippines.” (2018) In saying this he sets himself apart from the vast majority of other posters on these platforms as someone open to performing oral sex on Filipina women, even if he does not usually do so. By making clear that he intentionally provided her pleasure he also gets to present himself as sexually skilled and generous not just monetarily as a client, but sensually as a sex partner, however temporarily. As Rivers-Moore (2010) explains, “the self esteem and social status among one’s peers, depends, in part, on sharing these pleasure narratives.” (224) As masculinity is relationally achieved and maintained by constantly comparing behaviours, mindsets, and actions against women and fellow men, these mongers use pleasure narratives as a means of asserting not only their sexual prowess, but using that prowess as an indicator of their manliness.

Finally, a central aspect of these pleasure narratives shared in trip reports is a monger’s penis. (192) *Kroan2009* talks about his penis by saying, “my little guy is above average in these parts or so I like to tell myself.” By comparing his penis’ size to that of Filipino men he not only reinforces colonial narratives of the de-sexualized Asian man with small and somehow therefore less effective penises, but also clearly asserts himself as bigger and therefore better than them. According to Kimmel and Fracher (2005), “many men report they have conversations with their penises,” and “the penis is transformed from an organ of sexual pleasure into a ‘tool,’ an instrument by which the performance is carried out, a thing, separate from the self.” (144) *Shadow87* exemplified this most of all the mongers in this research as he specifically referred to his penis as, “Elvis (what I call my dick)... he was ready to perform again (see what I did there haha).” (2018) This was an interesting case for multiple reasons. For one, by assigning his penis with a male name he’s assigned a gender specifically to a part of his own body, identifying it as the locus of his masculinity via sexual performance. Moreover, his status as an icon is precisely because his musical talent and personification of male heterosexuality were so deeply intertwined. By naming his penis after him, *Shadow87* indicates an aspiration to somehow emulate that kind of success, or even be making a joke that other people – especially women – will also hold his penis in high regard after they see it ‘perform.’ Rubin (1975) writes that the penis as a cultural symbol “...is the embodiment of the male status, to which men accede, and in which certain rights inhere – among them, the right to a woman.” The way

these men focus attention onto their penises to exemplify their sexual prowess and resulting masculine status is predicated on this exact idea.

Kimmel and Fracher (2005) also said, “[for men] sexuality is the proving ground of adequate gender identity and provides the script that men will adopt, with individual modification, as the foundation for sexual activity.” (143) In previous sections, these men talked about reasons they feel a need to compensate in their daily lives in North America, and this chapter explores how their sexuality becomes a tool through which they do. This chapter explores how centralizing heterosexuality as their ultimate signifier of manliness and emphasizing their heterosexual success in a multitude of terms, allows these men to signify their embodiment of this key aspect of masculinity in ways unattainable to North American men who do not monger. By asserting their sexual abilities, situating and emphasizing their orgasm as the ultimate pinnacle of that sexual success, and referring to their penises as the object through which that success and gender performance is epitomized, these men use their sexual performance as a central form of gender-affirming performance.

### **5.3 Narratives of Sex Tourism as Masculine Performance**

Yasmina Katsulis (2010) argues, “men have a particular image of themselves, which they wish to cultivate...” (226) By virtue of these forum posts being completely dependent on what each man wishes to share in their post and how, each one exhibits a different writing style. The contrast between each post is representative different ways men in these online communities express and demonstrate their masculinity to readers. While I chose posts that are generally long and rich in detail in order to glean as much information as possible from each, their various writing styles and engagement with readers is something that I have noticed variations in.

*BetterThanGod2* and *psychman* have posts that are detailed, and within that detail demonstrate and highlight a complexity about themselves that challenges assumptions of these men as masculine exclusively through their pursuit of maximal sexual encounters. *BetterThanGod2's* sensual descriptions of encounters and his experiences, along with his employment of a more complex vocabulary demonstrate an intellectual intelligence and also suggest an emotional intelligence in being able to read the body language of the women he hires. This intelligence also suggests belonging to a higher class, and even though he still primarily writes about women in regards to their physical beauty and sexual appeal, his style of writing suggests to readers that he is able to transcend the otherwise banal descriptions of “hot” women that other posters employ. In fact, he writes about women as though they are characters in a romance novel, with highly descriptive attention given to describe their beauty, “Mako is extremely beautiful... Her breasts are ample and her nipples are a shade of light pink. I'm absolutely smitten!” and writes their personalities as demure, serving, caring, and doting, “We make our way to the bed. She tells me she wants to massage me and I oblige. I'm face down on the bed and she covers my back heavily with baby oil. Her breasts, vagina, and buttocks are all used to massage my body and I'm in a state of bliss.” (BetterThanGod2 2018) With this fantastical language, he constructs himself the hero of this story. By constructing fantastical scenarios and ‘characters’ in recounting his sex tourism experiences, he creates space to represent himself as suave, charming, and just as enthralling of a central male character in his own story.

The majority of *Psychman's* trip report seems quite standard in his explanations and descriptions of mongering, the women he hires, and the sex they have. However, the end of his post takes what seems like a sharp divergence from the tone he maintained throughout the rest of his post. In a closing section where he reflects on how enjoyable of a trip he had, he confronts the mongering mindset that Filipinas are objectifiable and things to consume without any consideration for their autonomy, control over their situations, or

humanity. He directly addresses readers, “To those of you who will soon book a flight to seek and destroy what you will call LBFM (Little Brown Phuck Machines)..Phuck you twice- I hate that term.” (Psychman 2013) In doing so, he positions himself as an advocate for respecting the Filipina women any monger may encounter in the future, as if to fulfil a sort of self-assumed protector role for them within the mongering community itself. This challenges a mongering identity as one of pure consumption, and provides complexity to his own masculine identity as more of a contentious consumer at worst, and genuinely caring man at best.

Other posters do not delve into too much detail about their experiences or any feelings they may have had while in destination. There could be multiple reasons behind this, including a masculine rejection of expressing emotion as a means of asserting emotional impenetrability, as a way to framing oneself as a gentlemanly figure who does not ‘kiss and tell’, or as an overt power play against the male readership in denying them recognition for

#### **5.4 Intentions, Strategy, and Preparations Made**

Many accounts included users’ descriptions of intentions that they held in preparation for and in going into their mongering trips, either explicitly stated or implicitly demonstrated.

Some men were very clear in their posts about their intentions for travel and what they hoped to get out of their time in the Philippines. *Shadow87* said that he went to the Philippines “for the fantasy and goddammit I’m going to enjoy it.” Later in his post, after hiring one woman for multiple days because he liked her so much he reflected on an intention he had for his trip, “I swore to myself that I wouldn’t get the same girl twice.” *BarhoppingButterfly* also talks about how he wants to “find someone new” as often as possible, and doesn’t mention seeing any of the women he meets there for more than their single encounter. *Briggy* mentioned that he was also going to Thailand immediately after spending time in the Philippines, so went to Angeles City and Olongapo to understand how mongering works in the Philippines so he could, “hit the ground running when I landed in Thailand.” As a first-time monger to Southeast Asia, he viewed his time in the Philippines as a way for him to practice. By naming their expectations for their trips, these men can communicate to their readers that their reasons for travel and eventual posting are in line with the mongering community’s priority of having sex with many Filipina women, and then compare those expectations to their actual experiences and allow their readers to do the same to confirm masculine success.

Other posts feature men explaining some strategies they use to maximize their potential for sexual success on their trips. Multiple men talked about different ‘games’ they would play with women at the bars. *LonelyTraveler* (2018) would tease women working at bars he frequents by offering them money if they remembered his name. This goes beyond the expected procedure of how men get women’s attention at mongering bars, and so instead of having to buy a single comparably expensive lady drink for one woman, he has the ability to appraise multiple women at the same time while not having to spend as much money. *BangkokPartier* explained how he would tell women that it was his birthday as a means of convincing the women he hired to do extra things like photo shoots, or dance for him before having sex.

Throughout multiple trip reports, among their expectations and strategies, men also went into detail about different ways they prepared for their trips. Men like *Big\_B* (2013) made clear from the beginning of his post exactly how much money he had with him and regularly clarified how much money he was spending, effectively allowing readers to follow his budgeting throughout. He explained how he had money allocated into different accounts like a “doesn’t really matter account”, his savings, his quantities of cash, and then the amount of money his military pension will be paying him monthly, and when. *Bang-*

*kokPartier* says, “For fun money I had built up a \$4,000-dollar entertainment fund for partying at the bars each night. I figured that should be more than enough for a 9 day stay.”

Preparations were also made beyond budgeting, however, and some men brought with them different supplies in order to enhance their sex tourism experience. *PaulyVegas* talked about the pills he brought with him in order to have the copious amounts of sex he intended,

“3X a day fucking just isn’t what it was at 30. At 55, a bit more challenging eh! Pill count: 2-3 ibuproprin [sic] per day. 100 mgs of Viagra twice a day with 20mg Cialis once. Oh, and the industrial size bottle of antacid tablets via Target. Close to 200 for a 30 day trip. Bottle emptied.” (2014)

Here he mentions that his age is proving it more difficult to be able to sexually perform like younger men or even his younger self, so these pills allow him to achieve that better. This strategy of risk management allows him to protect himself from shame associated with lowered virility, as well as preventing “the loss of time, effort, money, and face.” (Katsulis 2010: 223)

*BetterThanGod2* (2018) mentioned multiple times that on the advice of a fellow monger he brought with him a “small over the shoulder bag” that he filled with what he considered essentials, “Cigarettes, a bottle of Pocari Sweat, mints, a bottle of Lemon Verbena by Agraria (my favorite room spray) and my Bose Soundlink Mini.” By also mentioning certain items by brand name he subtly paraded the money spent on these supplies, including his luxury room spray and high-end speaker. *BangkokPartier* (2018) was also thoroughly prepared, and told his readers about the separate “entertainment suitcase” he brings with him when mongering. Over the course of his post, readers learn that it is filled with “dozens of sexy lingerie outfits,” banners to take photos of women with, and gifts like mardi gras beads and dozens of cheap rings and glow-in-the-dark bracelets. By equipping himself with trinkets and gifts to hand out to women at the bars he goes to he sets himself apart from other men at the bar and can quickly and inexpensively get the attention of many women at once and position himself as generous. (Rivers-Moore 2012: 861) With these items intentionally packed in advance, men were prepared in advance to be able to put into motion the strategies they had that would allow them to fulfil their expectations of sexual success.

## **5.5 Vulnerability and Responses to It**

Finally, another recurring theme I noticed while analysing these reports was the different ways men engaged with moments of vulnerability during their trip, and how they responded to it. Further, Coston and Kimmel (2012) wrote about some ways that men subjected to disenfranchisement, “reduce, neutralize, or resist the problematization of masculinity as a constitutive element of their marginalization...” (97). Their article focuses on how intersections like disability, sexuality and class affect these men’s access to fulfilling hegemonic masculinity, and while the men examined in this research do not necessarily experience these specific forms of disenfranchisement, their reports do reveal that they can employ similar types of coping mechanisms. The way men recount how they do respond to moments of vulnerability in light of this normative expectation is the focus of this chapter.

*Big\_B* (2013) described his first night as a roller coaster, with ups and downs. He talks in his report about how he hired three women to have a foursome, but by the time they got there after heavily drinking, only two women remained. The three went into the shower together and one was so drunk she was eventually, “on her knees yakking all over the shower, warm vomit drenching my nether regions and legs and [the other woman in the

shower with them] laughing her ass off.” (Big\_B 2013) The sick woman left not long after without accepting the payment he insisted on giving her, and the other woman “salvaged the night out of my ruined 4-some by being a trooper and willing to let me explore all holes.” (Big\_B 2013) By referring to this evening as a roller coaster he implies from the beginning that the night was thrilling, prompting readers to expect his overall experience to be positive in retrospect. He also positions himself as the understanding gentleman by not being overtly angry with the woman who vomited on him and even, “tried to give her some money.” With this addition to his story, *Big\_B* was able to ensure that readers perceived him as a good man even when someone wronged him. The real potential of having sex with multiple women at the same time, and even having the opportunity to be in a shower with two women at the same time would likely be a popular heterosexual male fantasy, but the actuality of the situation ended up being the antithesis of what he was expecting. Brannon and David (1976) said that a basis axiom of North American Masculinity relies on men being a “Sturdy Oak” where they cannot succumb to pressure and must maintain composure, especially during a crisis. Yet, by posing the night’s events and his reaction to their unfolding how he did he prevents potential ridicule that could be thrown in his direction based on the very humiliating circumstance he eventually found himself in, and by setting this tone for readers, he primes them and their impending perceptions to minimize his perceived vulnerability before it is even expressed.

*Shadow87* uses different strategies to respond to instances of vulnerability throughout his trip report. He first mentioned his awe upon arriving in Angeles City, saying, “I definitely looked like a first-timer with my head on a swivel,” and “looked around like a fat kid in a candy store.” In saying this he admits to being inexperienced, but the way he demonstrates that he is able to embrace new and unfamiliar circumstances suggests an air of confidence and comfort in feeling like he has some control over his surroundings and situation. Later, he wrote about “J”, the woman mentioned as a positive outlier and how he feared that he was starting to get attached to her. From his perspective, this was cause for concern as according to Kimmel and Fracher (2005), in order to safeguard one’s masculinity a man must ensure, “a ceaseless patrolling of one’s boundaries,” and “the avoidance and repudiation of all behaviours that are even remotely associated with femininity...” (143) *Shadow87* feared feeling attached to her in ways beyond sexual chemistry, and the potential of feeling emotionally vulnerable with her directly contradicted his intentions to pursue frequent sex with no expectation of emotional vulnerability. Therefore, in order to mitigate this he said, “[I] explained how it being my first trip I wasnt [*sic*] planning on having one girl even though she exceeded all my expectations I came down to get as much booty as possible and she already ruined my plans (said that part jokingly)”. By making clear the tone with which he spoke, *Shadow87* tells readers that even though he almost allowed himself to experience emotional vulnerability, he was able to end their arrangement in a straightforward but also light-hearted way, avoiding being misunderstood but also while still being nice.

Overall, these men’s representations of self within their own narratives serve as an opportunity for them to strengthen their claims to masculine power and assertions of masculinity. The ways in which they strategically describe themselves encourages readers to draw certain conclusions about them that may reinforce their internal perceptions of manliness.

## Chapter 6 : Engagement with the Mongering Community

This chapter will explore the ways mongers interact with one another on these online communities, within the community and as representatives of it. While only some of these narratives explicitly mention physically interacting with other sex tourists while in the Philippines, the nature of sharing these reports to male-exclusive online communities means that interactions between men vis-à-vis these posts necessitates male interaction online. The masculine effects of these homosocial engagements within the mongering community are explored in the following chapter.

### 6.1 Experience, Advice & Hierarchy within the Mongering Community

The online mongering communities of *Philippineaddicts.com* and *mongertravels.com* are composed of men with a widely varying amount of experience as a sex tourist to the Philippines. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) clarify that hierarchies of masculinities and the hegemony embedded in them can be specific to social environments, and I argue that male-exclusive online sex tourism forums are one such environment. In their trip reports, these men engage with where they believe other men would place them within the community's hierarchy based on their experience, and as a result offer advice within their trip reports accordingly.

Some posters are inexperienced, writing about how this trip was their first, either ever as a monger or first time to the Philippines. As a result, these less experienced men tend to talk about how they instead implement advice they obtained from other posts on the forum made by more experienced men. *Shadow87* (2018) was inexperienced in both international travel and sex tourism before his trip to the Philippines, so said at the beginning of his post that, "...before I went I read up in everything I could on Angeles and for any newbies most of it helped but some was just pure shit meant [*sic*] to scare people [*sic*] off I guess." His inexperience means that he knew to turn to more experienced mongers' advice that was available online, and understood that he has a lot to learn experientially compared to other men who have posted their trip reports before. His report then also serves as a way for readers who also lack mongering experience in the Philippines to see what advice shared on the site is useful in practice. In expressing his understanding of his position in the online community as someone still new to mongering, his mistakes can be understood as a result of ignorance or naiveté and may serve as further advice to readers. *PaulyVegas* (2014) starts his report with a half-joke by asking, "can I eat at the big boys table now" as a means of asking for permission to be recognized and legitimized within the online community as a "big boy" because he has now had his own mongering trip and put in the effort to write and share his trip report. He proposes these actions as a rite of passage into the respected echelons of the online mongering community, asking for the recognition he believes he deserves. This is especially interesting because he writes about already being an experienced monger before writing this report, just not as a contributing member of an online community. His humour could also be asserting that he believes he deserves this recognition already, and that more recognized members have less experience than him.

Inexperienced men are not the only ones that take and share advice with each other though, as *BetterThanGod2* demonstrates. He has been on sex tourism trips to the Philippines before, but adopted advice from someone he knew on how to enhance his experiences even further. "This is my first time carrying a man-bag with some essentials. I learned this from Ben, and I'm looking forward to having some of my items with me dur-



ing my night out.” (BetterThanGod2 2018) In his case, another man gave him advice not on the basics of how mongering works, but on different supplies he should bring with him in order to enhance the experiences he is already capable of attaining. Furthermore, by making clear that the advice he took did greatly enhance his experiences, he allows readers to understand that it might do the same for them if they are interested and they he could be credited in their own reports.

Experienced mongers use different ways to establish their status as experienced. Some do not offer direct advice in their reports and assert their position as more knowledgeable than others by bragging about themselves. *PaulyVegas* (2014) compensates for being potentially considered new within the community by writing that in Angeles City, “I am KNOWN. A marked man,” and “I have to hide my face lest two or three girls grab me for a double session.” In writing this he shows readers that he is not only a man with a reputation offline in Angeles City, but that he is recognized for the potential power he may hold, be it monetary or sexual. His bragging makes his reputation in Angeles City seem more of a nuisance than something he enjoys the novelty of, and that by comparison his reputation within an online community is personally less important. To other men reading posts like his, this sounds like a fantasy in and of itself, so he asserts that the importance of his offline reputation is of far greater importance than within the online community, even though he contributes to it.

Other experienced mongers are comfortable in their level of experience and amount of knowledge that they understand how their reports are often sources of information and advice for readers, to the point of engaging with that reality or directly addressing their readers to provide explicit advice. Psychman (2013) provides specific recommendations about which women to avoid hiring, namely: freelancers. “The general rule of thumb is avoid, avoid, avoid, especially [*sic*] ones walking the streets... The price of women in clubs is so cheap, the general wisdom is that it is just not worth it.” Here he indirectly writes to readers less experienced than he, and by repeating common knowledge within the community he reinforces it with his own status with the rationale that he is trying to protect fellow community members.

LonelyTraveler (2018) is a very active member of the online mongering community and is cognizant of his respected status within the community and takes on a sense of responsibility with his posts by saying, “For me I try and write for us old folks but also the new ones of where things are and what to expect.” His posts provide a relatable story for fellow mongers similar levels of experience to identify with, and also provide advice for readers looking to gain knowledge. Through this claim he cements himself as a community member that meaningfully contributes to the group’s collective knowledge, one that puts his expertise to good use in ways beyond his own benefit.

Regardless of experience levels, these men that post their trip reports online situate themselves within the mongering community. Comparison against other men, “plays a fundamental role as a masculinizing practice” and dictates how much male power men get as a result of that comparison. (Rivers-Moore 2012: 856) Katsulis (2010) writes about how sex tourism forums like the ones exhibited in this research created a space where men can ‘be men’ and engage in conversations with generally like-minded others on topics otherwise frowned upon, and I expand that assertion to also note that within these online communities, hierarchies between the men also emerge. (215) Her article also mentions, “the self esteem and social status among one’s peers depends, in part, on sharing these pleasure narratives.” (Katsulis 2010: 224)

## **6.2 Communal Worldviews Within the Online Communities**

Among the stories of sexual success, overcoming challenges faced while on their trips, and other testosterone-driven anecdotes shared in these trip reports, many men also reflected on the moral implications of their sex tourism. Chow-White (2006) considers online sex tourism discussion boards like the ones these trip reports can be found on and asserts, “From a micro point of view, they are part of a particular discussion string and, at the macro level, each contributes to an evolving discursive formation about sex tourism.” (888) In doing so, these men shed light on forms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours of mongers from the community’s perspective, or even challenge some frequently recurrent themes that the community and men within it uphold.

Multiple men commented on other mongers’ behaviour as a way of identifying it as unacceptable. *LonelyTraveler* (2018) complains about men who show the local women at mongering bars posts and pictures other men have shared about them. He said, “Blame those White Knights for ruining a good thing” (*LonelyTraveler* 2018) Statements like these show how these actions go against a community understanding of internal knowledge, not to be shared with non-community members. Doing what might be widely considered as the normal or right thing to do by telling these women that other men are sharing pictures of them online spoils the fun of sexual conquest and secrecy that insulates the mongering community and its members.

*PaulyVegas* (2014) criticizes other mongers for being thoughtless and wilfully ignorant of the material realities of the Philippines as long as they are still able to maintain a suspended fantasy while there. He wrote about the “two week millionaires, dudes who are livin [*sic*] the dream because we can... who can’t see on the surface all that much.” He calls to larger structural issues, saying that sex tourists, even ones that are repeat tourists to Angeles City do not care about the the local host community, as long as there are still women at bars or on the street to hire. He questions readers’ opinions, “as long as you get to go home with a girl, who gives a fuck?” (*PaulyVegas* 2014) In doing so he explicitly calls upon the community’s worldview and perception of the Philippines, but also inserts himself as better than the larger community because of his cognisance regardless of simultaneously remaining part of it as well.

The consequences of that suspended fantasy also largely go unrecognized these mongers’ trip reports, but Chris (2018) from *DreamHolidayAsia.com* wrote in the closing remarks of his trip report, “I would say 40 to 50% of the working girls in AC had their first kid from a monger, either European, Australian or American and these mongers aren’t supporting their kids just left them, (I don’t know how you sleep at night)...” (Chris 2018) What is interesting however is that the writer immediately contradicts himself and undermines the judgement he is passing by saying, “... but I took an unopened box of 40 condoms with me to AC, I came home with an unopened box of 40 condoms.” (Chris 2018) He does not engage with further reflection on this hypocrisy, and instead ends up highlighting a further privilege that these mongers have access to in that they are not socially or morally held to take accountability for any potential consequences of their behaviour.

Individual narratives can highlight and reinforce to potentially thousands of readers certain aspects of the online communities’ shared perspectives. By doing this they contribute to the virtual community while revealing a means to understand how hegemony works in that community, dictating the criteria upon which men can be celebrated and afforded male power via recognition, or excluded and denied that sense of connection.

### **6.3 In Destination & Online - Camaraderie, Competition, and Time Spent Together**

While examining these trip reports another recurring point of interest for me was how men interact with each other both online and in destination. The posts each man shares are in the style of a forum discussion wherein other men can post comments and users can interact with each other. Men also interact with each other while in the Philippines as well, and this chapter will examine how those interactions online or in destination reflect either a sense of camaraderie or competition.

*Big\_B* (2013) mentions at the end of one story that he was writing and publishing his post from bed, and that he still currently had a woman mentioned in the story sleeping in his bed. He demonstrates to the community that even while still in the presence of a woman he's paid money to spend time with, after they had sex his engagement with these men in the online community is more important than his engagement and interaction with her. This also begs the question of his motivations for mongering, and whether or not the majority of his validation stems from his sexual encounters with women or the positive reinforcement for those sexual behaviours afforded by his male peers in the online community. By updating throughout his trip and reassuring readers to expect more content he expands the purpose of his trip report from a means of sharing experience in a space where others are likely to understand and support him, to a vehicle through which he actively builds connections with members of the community even if only online. This sense of social connection predicated on the hypermasculine scripts of these mongering forums becomes the foundation through which they connect, and as a result how he constructs and reinforces his own sense of manhood.

*Shadow87's* trip report offered a few examples of the types of interactions men can have in person while in the Philippines. He wrote about seeing a post on PhilippineAddicts.com of men scheduling a group meet-up and decided to join. Eventually some of the men, "...asked me if I've ever been to this one place down the road I said no and off we went." They took him to what he thought was an illegal establishment and said he was overwhelmed by female sexual attention, brought on by the encouragement of the other men in his group who had all been there before. He wrote, "So [the] guy that brought me helped me out and explained the deal so I took 3 one was bj expert one was fuck expert and the third like to play with nipples and balls so I figured what the hell." (Shadow87 2018) For him, the other men he met up with knew that he was the least experienced in the group so made sure to offer advice and help orient himself both within these new experiences of mongering but also within this group of men. In their exchange of knowledge on a shared interest, these men are able to bond and further widen the community through these group experiences.

Not all interactions between men however are based in camaraderie, and some reports instead pose other men as competition against whom the author must compare himself to. Psychman (2013) for example explained the other men he sees while mongering and commented,

"Mongers- Many, many down and out Auzzies and former US service men. OMG, a very washed up group, by and large. Twenty years of hard booze and fast women Phuck [sic] you up. Lots of Koreans in town- they tend to keep to themselves. The women complain about the Mayla and Indian [sic] guys; whether true or not they say they smell badly and are disrespectful."

His appraisal of other types of men he also sees mongering is judgemental and predicated on stereotypes, thereby implicitly positioning himself as different from all these types of men, and a unique individual amongst a crowd of degenerates. By these standards, simply being a normal American man sets him apart and makes him better than the others that

surround him, placing him as obviously more favourable to readers and presumably, women.

*Bangkokpartier* (2018) also mentioned multiple ways that he asserts himself as different from, and therefore better than, other men he sees while mongering. He talked about “a bit of madness” ensuing in a bar when he started giving out trinkets and cheap rings he brought with them to attract their attention, “girls shoved their hands at me saying ‘me me me.’” (Bangkokpartier 2018) In using this as a tactic to garner interest and then brag about it later in his trip reports, he presents himself as a bringer not only of potential money to a few women, but also has ‘wealth’ as signified in these trinkets that he disperses to a wider number of women, also proving himself generous. With these small gifts he was able to redirect the majority, if not all female attention to him at the club, even if for a short period of time. This encourages readers to assume that he won some competition for the female attention against other men at the bar also trying to do the same.

He also talked about a bar one night that was full of other men too, many of whom wanted to hire the woman he also wanted to barfine. “I came, I saw, and I conquered the Korean customers in smackdown fashion.” (BangkokPartier 2018) He uses combative language to emphasize the competitive nature these men felt about this woman, and by being the only one actually able to hire her that night made him the winner. He emphasized his superiority by feigning humility, “but really, my apologies for the hoardes of south Korean guys,” and is clearly proud to be better and faster than them at attaining what they all wanted. This instance is the most explicitly competitive between men, and directly contradicts the assumption that women are the ones who exclusively compete for men’s attention in the Philippines. Therefore, though it could potentially dispel part of the fantasy of mongering in the Philippines, *Bangkokpartier’s* success against adversarial men reframes the narrative as his story of success and achievement. By highlighting the competition between themselves and other men, these posters are able to assert their superiority over others on a social plane where unlike when compared to women, that status of superior is fought for and earned rather than assumed.

While the majority of men’s writing is about either themselves or the women they interact and have sex with, notable still are the ways that these men mention how they interact or perceive other men around them. Rivers-Moore (2012) writes that through comparison with other sex tourists, men are able to justify their own actions, which, “explains the persistent preoccupation with the activities and attitudes of other men.” (857) Through interaction with other men online or in person, these men write about those instances as an implicit action of comparison where forging connections solidifies them as legitimate mongers, and acts of comparison allow men to position themselves as superior. Regardless of the outcome of their interactions with other men, these mongers use them narratively as opportunities to assert their own masculine power.

Though at first trip reports may seem to be primarily about men’s interactions with Filipina women, their narratives also offer insights into how men interact with each other. Masculinity can be constructed internally but fortified through external validation from other men, which is something they have access to through the online communities of Philippines-Addicts.com or MongerTravels.com. As explained in the previous chapter, these narratives are a form of masculine performance, and the implications of those interactions through their narratives is the final key component of understanding how these mongers’ narratives contribute to their constructions of masculinities.

## Chapter 7 : Conclusions

My research was guided by questions about North American sex tourists' constructions and performances of their masculinities through the narratives they write and share in online communities. The data collected from 12 sex tourists' trip reports was analyzed using discourse analysis tools focusing on personal narratives and led me to three central thematic findings. In Chapter 4 I explored how strategic representations of Filipina women poignantly reveal how men represent themselves comparatively. By sharing commentary on Filipina women's bodies, sexual skill, and attitudes or demeanours within their narratives reinforces stereotypes of Asian women as hypersexualized and therefore sexually consumable, and implicitly position themselves as their comparative evaluator and consumer. Chapter 5 delves into self representations in men's narratives and how they construct parts of those narratives to uphold certain idealized masculine characteristics they exhibit and mitigate any perceptions that potentially threaten their masculinities. Finally, I interrogate in Chapter 6 how these narratives exist in the male online community and how acceptance in and contribution to that community legitimizes each poster's demonstrated manliness within a perceived hierarchy.

Existing literature on sex tourism and online interactions between sex tourists also looked at how perpetuating ideas of local women as sexualized Others reinforces North American masculine subjectivities, and how their narratives serve as a vehicle through which these men can connect with a community of others with shared experiences and find the masculine validation necessary for male fulfillment. (Katsulis 2010; Rivers-Moore 2012) Some research on the subject explored how sex tourism can reflect certain understandings of classical liberalism and self-sovereignty. (O'Connell Davidson 2001) The findings of my research confirm many observations made in other studies, and also provide a contextual example in terms of sex tourism to the Philippines, bringing into conversation the socio-sexual phenomenon of Asian fetishism. Moreover, my research findings propose how men's representations of self within their narratives allows them to exhibit their masculine abilities and expertise for self-affirmation but also to intentionally contribute to and situate themselves within the online mongering community's hierarchy to gain approval and masculine legitimization. These men demonstrate that they use both sex tourism and their narratives of it to construct their masculinities. Therefore, while sex tourism alone can be a masculine-affirming practice, these men also use the trip reports of their mongering that they write and share within online communities as a way to compound feelings of masculine achievement.

# Appendix 1: Monger Profiles and Basic Information Overview

Username	Post Title	Country of Origin	Age	Mongering Experience to the Philippines	Date Posted (dd/mm/yy)	# of Views	# of Replies	Source Forum
Apostate	"Malate Makati Manila Angeles City Subic Bay - February 2018"	USA	n/a	n/a	08/03/2018	1,422	16	Philippines-Addicts.com
Bangkokpartier	"Angeles City After Hours - Trip Report - Go Hard Or Go Home"	USA	58	"12 years"	06/04/2018	1,333	10	Philippines-Addicts.com
BathoppingButterfly	"Philippines July Trip Report Part 1"	USA	n/a	"15 trips", "11 years"	29/07/2018	1,665	17	Philippines-Addicts.com
BetterThanGod2	"Eat, Pray, Fuck - Manila Trip Report 2018"	USA	33	1 previously mentioned trip	24/05/2018	3,510	32	Philippines-Addicts.com
Big_B	"Philippines: Came For A Visit, Decided To Never Leave"	USA	47	"6 trips"	2/11/2013	45,233	652	Philippines-Addicts.com
Briguy	"Checking Out The Scene (A Newbie Week In Angeles City & Subic)"	USA	58	0	26/06/2018	1,366	17	
Chris Long	"My Trip Report About Meeting Girls In Angeles City - Philippines"	USA	n/a	0, has been to 4 other mongering destinations	n/a, 2018	n/a	n/a	DreamHolidayAsia.com
kroan2009	"Young Fil-Am's Cherry Experience [Pros/cons] + Bar Reviews"	USA	"early 20s"	0	28/5/2018	1,637	25	Philippines-Addicts.com
LonelyTraveler	"2018: Second Trip, Ac-Taclaban-Manila-Ac-Manila"	USA	n/a	1 previous trip	22/07/2018	4,378	58	Philippines-Addicts.com
paulvregas	"trip report"	USA	n/a	"it's late in my mongering career"	03/02/2014	n/a	n/a	MongerTravels.com
psychman	"PI, PI OHHHHHH in two parts, 2012 and 2013"	USA	n/a	0, Mentions experience in other mongering destinations	23/07/2018	n/a	n/a	MongerTravels.com
Shadow87	"First Trip"	Canada	30	0	06/09/2018	97	1	Philippines-Addicts.com

\*\*Note: As information like age or experience is self-disclosed within each trip report, some information is not included and the corresponding field will display "n/a"

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