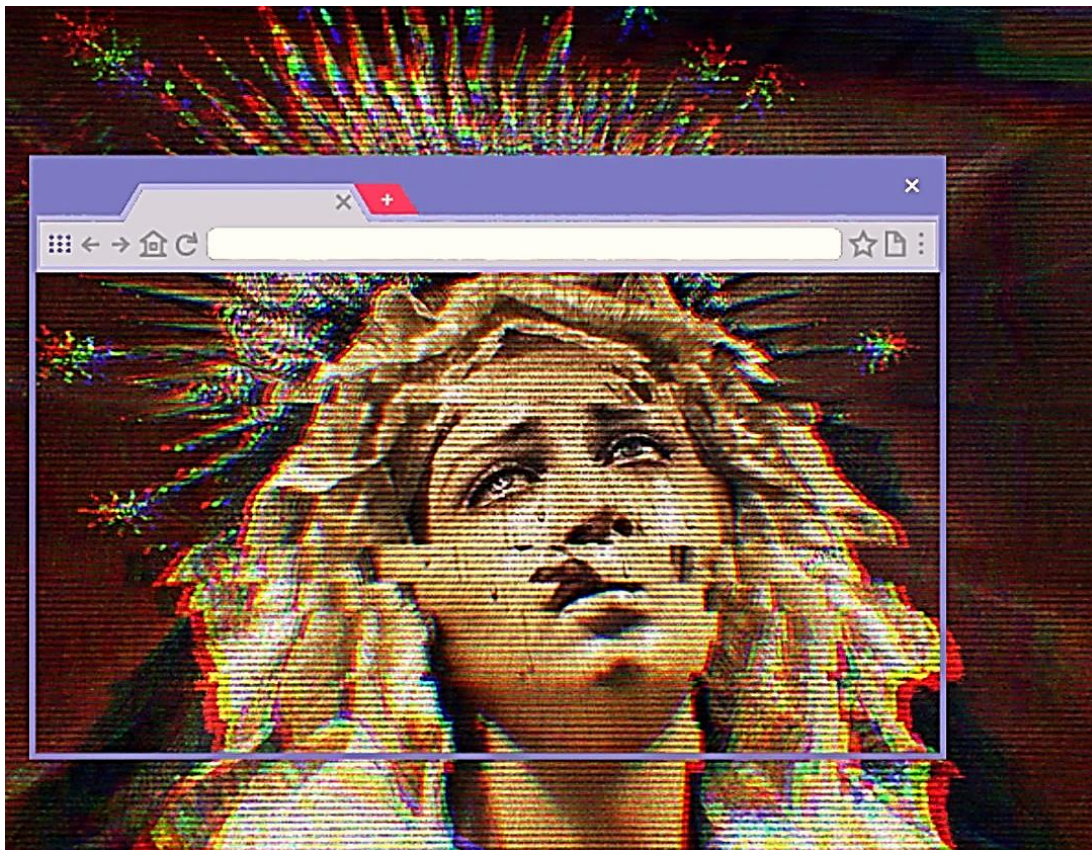


Machismo, Marianismo and Single Women's Sexual Agency in the Aruban Context.

A qualitative exploration of the experiences of single women in Aruba who engage in casual sexual encounters with men



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Abstract

This study examined the way single women in Aruba approach casual sex. The way they perceive it, conduct it, and the messages they've received about sex in general. The central aim of this study was to provide an answer to the question about how single women navigate casual sexual encounters on Aruba. The theoretical framework developed for this study consisted of looking at the local gendered values in place. Aruba's religious background has cultivated a culture of marianismo and machismo, two concepts interacting and impacting the dynamics between men and women in Aruba. Marianismo, a term stemming from the worship of the Virgin Mary, depicts women as and requires them to act as semi-divine beings. After conducting fourteen interviews, the findings resulted in six themes in which it became clear that: men can be considered masters of the casual sex domain, women feel empowered through detachment, reputation management being central in these interactions, women remaining in sexually precarious situations, sex as a subject of major taboo within Aruban families, and sex as an act to leave outside home. 'Men' and 'family' are two of the forces impacting these women's sexual experiences through taboos and shaming practices. This has resulted in women's casual sexual activities being pushed into more 'underground' space, where their precarious position is amplified.

Keywords: Gender roles, Marianismo, Machismo, Sexual Agency, Casual Sex

1. Introduction

“Did boys have to aspire to be Jesus? I never saw any evidence of it. They were fornicating like rabbits while the Church ignored them and pointed us women toward our destiny—marriage and motherhood. The other alternative was putahood.”- Sandra Cisneros (1996, p.48)

During a discussion with a female elder the realization dawned that despite the social progresses made, women of 1950's Aruba have much in common with contemporary women. The women of that period faced repression in a manner that is certainly much more overt than what occurs in 2022. However, the undertones of secrecy, shame, and control are still the same. Young women and teen girls of the time had their every move monitored by their community. Having a neighbor or an auntie catch you hanging around a boy resulted in your parents hearing all about your 'scandalous' behavior in public. It is a story that could bring shame to the family, or at least embarrassment to your parents.

Corporal punishment was standard in disciplining these girls toward 'respectable' conduct. My elder who grew up during that period retold the story of the physical abuse she encountered after someone had told her mother that she was seen chatting with a boy at work. These abusive actions serve to instill shame and a need for secrecy surrounding romantic and sexual interests. A day that was potentially happy for my elder because she talked to her then crush, turned into one she bitterly retells nearly 70 years later. This story illustrated that even the most innocuous interaction could get a woman or girl in hot water back then. It is an all too common story, that could be retold by different actors living throughout different periods of time.

The impact of these events potentially reverberates throughout the decades, manifesting in different generations of women and girls on Aruba grappling with shame and secrecy regarding their sexual desires. Although in contemporary Aruban society liberal views have diluted some of the more extreme ideas regarding female modesty, the culture of sexual repression towards female sexuality has not completely dissolved. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the manner that women on Aruba negotiate their place in a system informed by conservative ideologies designed to limit their personal and sexual freedoms.

Aruba is a small-scale island with a long history of Christianity, where 75.7% of the Aruban community still identify as Catholic (CBS, 2013). This religion promotes strong views regarding modesty, abstinence, chastity, marriage, and motherhood. As a result, women and girls are those that come to be primarily assigned the burden of upholding and embodying these Christian values. This fosters an environment of misogyny and disdain towards those that deviate or are perceived to deviate from these norms. Although time leads to a diluting of these values, their impact remains. The following information provides context regarding the contemporary society in which the study takes places.

In 2015, the island's Family Planning (Famia Planea)¹ organization launched a campaign in which they produced a video PSA suggesting that girls who love their bodies dress modestly. The advert entailed a teenage girl being publicly shamed by her crush, strangers and peers for wearing what was considered a revealing outfit (i.e. shorts, top and red lipstick). Time is then turned back to show her putting on long pants and more neutral colors. This led to her not being subjected to negative attention or scrutiny but being accepted and admired by her crush. The advert faced only minor critique. Moreover, it is also necessary to note the reactionary developments regarding abortion on Aruba.

In 2018, abortion, a practice that is tolerated but illegal came to be at the whim of the local pharmacy association. The local pharmacies decided to not stock up or distribute pills that induce abortion, because it is illegal and could have potentially deadly physical (e.g. 'hemorrhaging') or psychological risks (Henriquez, 2018). To my knowledge, data on the amount of annual deaths or hospitalizations associated with the supposed complications from the abortion pill have not been presented. The medical procedure, however, while difficult to access remains an option provided by a few general practitioners on the island. In 2016 the cost to terminate a pregnancy was approximately 900 florins (Sociaal Economische Raad [SER], 2016), a sum that is half of the 2022 monthly minimum wage of Aruba.

These events reveal strong conservative ideologies, which have been upheld for decades due to the inaction of political actors fearing the potential alienation of their mainly religious (i.e. Catholic) base. Religious leaders regularly use their political lobbying power to impact public discourse and stall policies promising social progress (e.g. marriage equality) (Rasmijn, 2016). Women's bodies and sexualities are subjected to policing strategies by the state, their family members, and their peers. Therefore, this study uses this opportunity to uncover the impact of these inequalities on women's sexual freedoms in Aruba.

Women pursuing their own sexual desires outside the scope of a committed monogamous relationship are considered particularly problematic for the established norms of sexual repression (Beres & Farvid, 2010). Moreover, considering that much of the popular research on casual sex center white American college students, Aruba's culture and history could provide interesting scientific contributions to the field. The American experience does not necessarily represent the experiences of women everywhere, and the family structures and living situations of women in Aruba differ from those of women in Europe or in the US.

In many instances' households are multigenerational, here women well into their adulthood live at home with their parents and other family members. This fact raises the question on how women manage their own sexual interests without the usual privacy (or anonymity) afforded to women living in other wealthier or larger countries in the world. Particularly casual sex is investigated because sexual activity by people in monogamous relationships is given a sort of 'legitimacy' not afforded to people in other arrangements (Beres & Farvid, 2010). 'Casual sex' is defined in this study as a one-time sexual experience or "...a long term sexual arrangement 'outside' of a committed relationship" (Beres & Farvid, 2010, p. 381).

¹ The local organization affiliated to the US' Planned Parenthood. Famia Planea, is an organization that distributes and sells contraception. The organization explicitly states on its website's FAQ page that it does NOT provide abortion services.

For the scope of the study the focus is on heterosexual or bisexual women's sexual encounters with men they are not in a committed monogamous relationship with. The central research question of this study is: **How do single women in Aruba navigate casual sexual encounters with men?** This study is conducted from a feminist standpoint theory (FST) perspective. Harding (2004) describes FST as a way that the "...oppressed can learn to identify its distinctive opportunities to turn an oppressive feature of the group's conditions into a source of critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured" (p.7). The subject matter will be investigated from an explicitly feminist lens.

Here the research has at its core a feminist ideology that prioritizes women's voices and experiences in an effort to reveal the inequalities that are particularly gendered in nature. The research participants' experiences help answer the question of how they navigate the thin line between expressing their sexual desires and the ever-present pressure to conform to a certain level of respectable femininity.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research's focus is on the manner that casual sexual encounters of single Aruban women are impacted by certain gendered constraints. The sexual experiences of women have for most of history been subjected to control, suppression, and policing. As previously discussed, the messaging by organizations involved in providing contraceptives have taken a stance suggesting that women's bodies should be controlled by the state, and even covered in modest clothing if one wishes to be respected. Although this might appear as a hyperbolic reading of the events occurring in the previous years, the impact of the lack of political and social action in tackling or prioritizing these issues suggest that women's sexuality and bodily autonomy is simply unimportant.

Women navigate their lived experiences under a structure of gender inequality, and this is no different for the sexual freedoms they can practice. To uncover more on this particular experience this study focuses on the elements that concern and impact (heterosexual or bisexual) women's sexual liberties.

2.1. Gender roles

Gender is depicted as a dichotomy of what society considers 'man' or 'woman'. Most of the discourse on the topic of gender has been presented in a bio-essentialist/ deterministic manner. From the conservative talking points on the institution of the family and family values, to certain streams of radical 'feminist' thought, gender differences are depicted as biologically innate. It is the writings of authors such as Butler (1988) that contributed to a more social constructionist view of gender to be introduced." ...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede [sic]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time-an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, 1988, p.519).

This view enables for a discussion on the manner that certain gendered scripts have been ascribed to certain people of the community. Gender is not necessarily something that is then intrinsic or inborn; gender is not a fixed notion, but rather one that is molded by practice. This is not to say that the performative nature of it does not come with real and impactful consequences. In depicting and fiercely maintaining the dichotomy of what society considers 'man' or 'woman', there is an implied compliance that comes with the territory of what the socially acceptable norms are for men and women. Gender has been established upon the privileged treatment of, mainly, cis-gendered heterosexual men.

This privileging of one group, leads to limitations in the freedoms of others. "Long before children understand the nature of religious groups, occupations, or schooling, they realize that there are two sex groups and that they belong to one of these groups." (Stockard, 2006, p.215). People are socialized to view and perform gender in a manner that is appropriate to the society that they are a part of. From this comes the notion that, since men are the inseminators and women the incubators, heterosexuality is seen as the only 'natural' form of sexuality and comes to be ascribed as a societal norm (Rutter & Jones, 2018). In the process of teaching children the correct gendered behavior they are awarded different values and penalties for deviation

(Stockard, 2006). The prototypical roles ascribed to femininity relies heavily on heteronormative ideals regarding domesticity and child rearing.

Society's gender inequalities lead to specific gendered ideologies regarding the 'appropriate' conduct/roles for the genders. Social and cultural constructs around sexuality need to be placed within the context of the patriarchal nature of society, which is riddled with gender inequalities in both the private and public spheres (Aksakal, 2013, p.53). Therefore, sexual encounters do not exist unaffected by this inequality. Women navigate this area of their lives under the same sexist conditions that permeate every other aspect of their reality. "...no one can deny the many dangers women face and the hetero-patriarchal structures of inequality, violence and moral censure within which women's sexuality is embedded and experienced" (Bakare-Yusuf, 2013, p. 28). Women choosing to engage in casual sex find themselves navigating a difficult territory, while the privileges afforded to cisgender heterosexual men easily facilitate their exploration in this area of their lives.

As previously expressed, gender is a lesson that is part of the course of socialization. There are certain behaviors that men and women are assigned or permitted. One of them being women's responsibility of upholding sexually 'moral' conduct. Crossley (2016) explains that we are social actors whose identities are shaped by social interactions." We become who and what we are by way of our involvement in social worlds" (Crossley, 2016, p.170). Women are social actors interacting with a social world that is sexist and unequal. Casual sex may clash with the values placed upon them requiring suppression of their own pursuit of pleasure and desire. It is less about the longing for physical please, and more a concept that is supposed to be of a more noble nature 'bound up with relationships and love' (Shefer & Foster, 2001, p. 377).

Although, the ability and agency in taking an oppositional stance to these constraints exist, women are not able to escape the social forces that wish to push them back in line. A woman's body is not considered her own, it is quite common for the men in their lives to feel a sense of ownership and duty to control their sexuality. Fathers, brothers, ex-boyfriends etc. regularly engage in behaviors intended to manage the reputation of the girls or women in their lives.

2.2. Machismo

Aruban society's stifling views on sexuality has its roots colonization and religious teachings. There is an extensive history of Roman Catholic missionaries providing education to the people of the Dutch Caribbean (Dijkhoff & Pereira, 2010). However, these teachings came paired with religious scriptures and messaging. "Although the majority of Christian missionaries were not directly associated with the colonial state, many of them functioned as quasi-colonial agents and incubators of Western norms and values." (Montgomery, 2017, p.226). These educational settings were divided along the lines of gender², where the educational outcomes emphasized men's need to acquire specific skills that can be translated to the labor market (i.e. construction, carpentry, etc.). On the opposing end, the curriculum prepared girls for domestic labor.

Although there is a perceived dwindling of the usual activities required by the Catholic faith: mass attendance, sacramental marriage, and participation in the Catholic ceremonies to affirm your

² Initially girls were not permitted to attend school.

faith and devotion (i.e. baptism, communion, and confirmation etc.). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, it is still a major contributing element to consider when speaking of gender ideologies on the island. The physical practice of the faith may be perceived to be diminishing, yet the cultural values pertaining to the faith still permeate everyday life. One such elements entail machismo, an ideology described by Mosher & Tomkins (1988) as:

“...a system of ideas forming a world view that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men who are adversarial warriors competing for scarce resources (including women as chattel) in a dangerous world.” (p.64).

This is a concept commonly attributed to Latin American societies, however, Aruba’s proximity and cultural similarities allows for these same gendered beliefs to thrive. Male chauvinism, authority and dominance lies central to machismo (Jezzini, Guzman & Grayshield, 2008), essentially this concept regards the manner that men are superior to women. Machismo has been a major driving force behind Aruban societal problems spanning decades, from excessive consumption of alcohol to aggressive and controlling behavior towards the women in their lives (Torres et al., 2002). Machismo has been what Andrade (1992) deemed a driving force behind all masculine behavior (p.33), and women have been left to contend with these issues. Machismo promotes men’s sexual freedom and is even an expression of their virility, while women that participate in these same sexual behaviors face harsh and potentially lasting penalties.

2.3. Marianismo

Women are regarded as subservient to the men in their lives, fostering what has been coined by Stevens (1973) as marianismo, a name that stems from the devotion to the Virgin Mary (and the meanings ascribed to her):

“...marianismo pictures its subjects as semi-divine, morally superior and spiritually stronger than men. A female cannot hope to attain full spiritual stature until her forbearance and abnegation have been tested by male-inflicted suffering. Men's wickedness is therefore the necessary precondition of women's superior status.” Stevens (1973, p.61)

This thinking makes martyrs of women in a society that mainly serves to affirm men’s machista attitudes, a belief system that is a double-edged sword. While it may appear positive for women to be considered as nearly divine or saintly creations of God, it does not allow them room to move through the world on their own terms. Their independence, agency, and freedom are stifled by the saintly role appointed to them. “...marianismo supports the patriarchal order, inherited from colonialism, disciplining the bodies of women and ensuring gendered expectations are followed” (Carranza, 2018, p.2). This Christian religious practice has been based upon one of the most important stories ever told in human history. It is the story of temptation, female sexual desire, and the ensuing castigation for engaging in sexual behavior.

This is the story of Adam and Eve. “An interesting tension at the heart of Christianity is that desire manifests itself at the outset and is immediately cast out. At the moment of desire’s coming to presence, it leads to expulsion” (Bakare-Yusuf, 2013 p. 34). Sexual repression and purity come

to be central to Christian teachings, in a gender unequal society this responsibility comes to rely mainly on the shoulders of girls and women serving as gatekeepers of their own sexual desires. Female passivity and purity come to be central to female identity (Carranza, 2018). Sexual morality is at the heart of this identity, the reputation management involved with keeping up an appearance of saintliness clashes with personal desires. "...problems may arise with regards to sexual satisfaction, as the pleasure derived from sexual activity conflicts with the expectation of sexual morality...sexual morality is a significant factor in the judgment of their character. (Hussain et al., 2015, p. 74).

A woman's reputation serves as currency on the marriage market, protecting one's perceived chastity is important work. Women operate under social constraints that serve the interest of heterosexual men. They must tread a fine line between being desirable enough and respectable enough for committed relationships (read: marriage). Stevens (1973) explains that sexual promiscuity is seen as a major stain on a woman's reputation, one that ultimately destroys their ability to be considered a 'good' mother or wife. Women engaging in behaviors that are deemed sexually promiscuous receive negative character evaluations (Gentry, 1998). This suggests that once women engage freely in casual sexual activities, men would be less interested in pursuing a committed relationship with them.

However, recent developments suggest that men's sexual reputation has also become subjected to scrutiny. "...men are granted more sexual freedom than women. As a consequence, men and women can be treated differently for the same sexual behaviors" (Endendijk et al., 2019, p. 163). Although there are clear sexual double standards at play, in recent history more awareness has been brought towards STP's (especially HIV/AIDS). Men's sexual behaviors come to be considered as potentially high risk for infections and are not as tolerated (Milhausen & Herold, 2002). The increasing awareness of STP's makes it so that men's hyper-masculine and sexually promiscuous image may lead to concern on their ability to be sexually responsible.

However, this fact also clearly suggests that the scrutiny men face is based on health concerns, and is not an immediate judgement on their character or morality. Marianismo has been a widely accepted social theory relevant for Latin American culture. Marianismo allows for more nuanced analysis to be given on the impact of gender roles in Latin American and Caribbean communities. The most important aspect relevant for this research is that marianismo results in women burdened with the responsibility of acting as gatekeepers of sexuality.

2.4. Women's sexual agency

Women performing their sexuality outside the bounds of the usual heteronormative sexual scripts may be subject to pathologization and ostracization in their communities. These women are considered less trustworthy (Muggleton et al., 2019), come to be seen as dehumanized entities (Arnocky et al., 2019), and considered psychologically unwell and poorly socialized (Devor & Dominic, 2015). Women are punished for not suppressing themselves sexually, and this occurs in myriad of ways: social exclusion (Hughes et al., 2020), and reputation tarnishing through gossiping behaviors (McAndrew, 2014). Aruba as a small-scale community allows for a rapid spread of gossip to flow, and negative categorizations about one's scandalous sexual deeds

remain imprinted in the community. Therefore, it can be indicated that women are forced to gate keep their sexuality and tread very carefully, so to avoid this sort of punishment.

It must be stressed that sexuality is an important source of fulfillment and pleasure in a woman's life (Baumeister & Twenge, 2002) and is considered an important social bonding power aiding in the formation of kinship ties (Reiss, 1986). Sexual pleasure and the indifference towards women's sexual pleasure is a component of gender inequality (Armstrong et al., 2012). In engaging in casual sexual encounters (as opposed to sex with a partner in a committed relationship), how does desire come to be negotiated within a context of limited sexual freedom? As previously mentioned, women play the role of gatekeepers to their sexuality, where sex is an asset to be leveraged in exchange of relational commitment (Averett et al., 2008). Yet women are not passive actors, so an important element to add to this discussion is the individual agency that women have in negotiating their place within an oppressive system. Agency refers to an individual's "...sense of full control over their sexual decision-making process" (Schalet, 2011 p. 204).

More specifically, this study involves sexual agency. This can be described as the ability to take initiative, awareness of one's own sexual desires "... and the individual's confidence and freedom to express sexuality in behaviors...Sexual agency can also be expressed through having the confidence and freedom to not engage in behaviors." (Averett et al., 2008, p.332). Sex and sexual health are generally discussed devoid of a discourse on desire, where sex is seen as a mainly biological act (Carmody, 2016). Therefore, an important component of the study regards women's own power and approach towards their sexual fulfillment.

This chapter discussed the manner that single women's casual sexual encounters are shaped by factors such as gender roles, machismo, marianismo, and their own sexual agency. The interview questions have been based on the information presented here. The following chapter elaborates on the methodological choices made for this research.

3. Methodology

This study makes use of a qualitative research strategy for its data collection and processing. A qualitative research method was selected in order to most appropriately serve the general aim of this scientific investigation. The following sections elaborate in more depth on the research's methodological choices.

3.1. Sampling and data collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with single women living in Aruba. This type of interview allowed the flexibility to deviate to some extent and attend to the respondent's viewpoint on their lived experiences in a more in-depth manner (Bryman, 2015). Moreover, 'interviewing' as data collection strategy was employed due to it being the most appropriate tool (i.e. in comparison to participant observation) for studying casual sexual encounters. As previously mentioned, this study makes use of FST in providing justification for the decision to prioritize women's voices. "The idea that knowledge comes from a particular perspective might, at first glance, seem dangerous to science. The conventional view of scientific knowledge resumes that we can arrive at objective knowledge..." (Halpern, 2019, p.2). Nevertheless, it must be stated that much of the scientific works created have centered cisgender white men, as either subject of the scientific study or researcher.

This demographic has been privileged as the 'default' voice, the true neutral. Harding (2004) stressed that an emphasis placed on 'neutrality' may inadvertently serve to advance hegemonic interests while distorting the social realities of non-dominant (i.e. more marginalized) groups (p.6). Centering the dominant voices that have historically and politically been privileged opaque's the material realities of individuals that do not have these privileges. Therefore, the use of FST stands in opposition to this often overlooked 'neutrality' bias by prioritizing women's voices during the interviews.

The interview questions were constructed on the basis of the theoretical framework (see appendix 1 for interview guide), and the finalizing questions were on general demographic information (e.g. age, religion etc.). The interviews have been conducted mainly in Papiamentu with native Papiamentu speakers. The duration for the interviews varied but were on average between 30 to 40 minutes. My initial aim was to interview a minimum of 8 women. Considering the sensitive and private nature of the research topic, I was cautiously optimistic. I obtained my participants by initially asking on Instagram if there were single women willing to partake in my study. This is where I encountered several women willing to partake in the study, and I ended up conducting 14 interviews through a snowball sampling method. It should be noted that data saturation was reached around the 12th interview, but I conducted 2 more interviews as a safety measure. The participants are between the ages of 26 and 37, varying in their educational levels and are 6 of them have children (see appendix 2 for demographic data).

The participants received a payment of 25 florins as a demonstration of appreciation for their time and effort in meeting with me. Interviews took place either in person or on Zoom, depending on what the participant felt was more convenient for their busy lives. 5 interviews were organized on Zoom and 9 were in person. With the permission of the participant (see appendix 3 for informational sheet) after reading them their rights as a research participant, the interview audio was recorded so to facilitate the verbatim transcription of the interviews.

3.2. Data analysis

The audio files consisted of conversations in Papiamentu, transcribing these interviews resulted in a lengthy and labor-intensive process due to the unavailability of AI transcription services able to recognize the Papiamentu language. A thematic analysis strategy was then used during the data analysis stage of the research. Thematic analysis can be described as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The analysis was conducted in a more organic manner. The transcriptions were repeatedly consulted, here the general topics and the frequency in which similar perspectives or experiences expressed were counted. This was an iterative process. During my analysis I became acutely familiar with each transcription and have revisited the audio files in moments where I needed to confirm the tone in which a participant had made a statement.

After repeating these steps, I was able to discern the overarching themes of the interview data. It must be noted that this process was also facilitated by the elements present in the theoretical framework’s guiding topics of machismo, marianismo, and individual agency. By identifying the central themes and/or differences between the interviews, I was able to gain better understanding of the participants’ experiences. From the emerging themes, the noteworthy quotes from the transcriptions were cautiously translated from Papiamentu to English, keeping in mind not to lose the original meaning of what was expressed. These quotes are provided throughout the upcoming chapter.

3.3. Ethical considerations and limitations

The Aruban community can be described as very tight knit, where ‘everyone knows everyone’. Therefore, anonymity was one of the highest priorities for this study, so to avoid that the participants come to be harmed (e.g. social repercussions) in any way due to their identities being exposed. Though it is common practice to include signed consent forms during research, I felt that the sensitive social conditions in which the research takes place required a reconsidering of the usual methods that result in an accumulation of a paper trail where participants’ identities remain documented. Therefore, the decision was made to forgo the use of a traditional signed consent form, to further protect the participants’ personal information. Moreover, this strategy was employed so to enable the participants the space to express themselves candidly.

The alternative strategy used was to provide the participant either a physical or digital copy of an information sheet (see appendix 3) containing the most essential information they need as a participant. The document stated the essential rights of the participants during the study. The

document elaborated on the participant's right to decline or withdraw their participation, the ability to request their data (e.g. audio file and/or interview transcription), and that their participation was completely voluntary and anonymous. The participants were also informed of their ability to skip questions that may be too laden with traumatic experiences or that may elicit negative emotional reactions. For every interview I read the information sheet aloud for the participant, asked them if they had any questions regarding the information presented, and then asked their explicit permission to start (and to record) the interview. During the interviews, in an attempt to prevent any form of emotional exploitation to occur (see appendix 4), there were certain subjects (e.g. sexual assault) I did not probe further into.

This study was not without limitations, although anonymity is an important component there may be some issues impacting that. Tolich (2004) described anonymity as protection against identification, this was termed by the author as 'external confidentiality' (p.101). However, this is limited by the study's use of the snowball sampling approach. Tolich (2004) explained that the 'internal confidentiality' may be jeopardized by this sampling approach. "This is the ability for research subjects involved in the study to identify each other in the final publication of the research" (p.101). Pseudonyms have been employed for the quotes presented in the following chapter, but it must be mentioned that anonymizing data is described as an ongoing process that entails a balancing act between "maximizing protection of participants' identities and maintaining the value and integrity of the data" (Saunders et al., 2014, p. 617). Anonymizing information remains a challenging but necessary work, and the information divulged has been carefully selected so to best conceal the participants' identities.

4. Findings

4.1. Men as masters of the casual sex domain

Men are encouraged to engage sexually with many different (female) partners, yet in an almost paradoxical manner, under marianismo women are discouraged from the same behaviors. Even though the women that have participated in this study may be moving away from the ideals of sexual purity and chastity as advertised by marianismo (Giordano et al., 2009), it is clear that in doing this they face hurdles that may be inconceivable to most heterosexual men on Aruba.

“I think men are getting more of a green light to have casual sex than women. So, the moment you are in tune with your sexuality as a female and you have casual sex out there, you get a label whether it is right or wrong, it happens. A lot of times people or females then tend to be secretive of their rendezvous, in order to not receive a label.” – Carla

“There is a saying ‘men can fall in mud, dust themselves off and keep walking, but a woman cannot.’” - Valentina

Women’s value is placed on their capacity to restrict access to their own bodies. As Valentina expressed, men’s reputation is not easily tainted by their sexual activity. This reality is one that was repeatedly expressed throughout the interviews. The domain of casual sexual encounters is one riddled with double standards that serve to privilege men’s sexual appetites.

“If a woman does it [casual sex] and a man finds out the woman, to say it bluntly, she is a slut. She gets called all sorts of names, but if a man does it ‘oh, he’s a man’ it’s something normal, he’s allowed.” - Thalia

“I think it’s something that’s not very talked about for the simple fact that if a guy has sex with more than one woman he is considered 'like wow, he's the man. the guy.’ – Simone

Simone and Thalia address the manner that men’s sexual activities are marked as accomplishments. These sexual inequalities are embedded within gendered ideologies and consequently reproduced within the dynamics of these casual encounters. Men come from a position of social power and are able to practice their power within these interactions. Considering that these interactions occur between these same people, it can lead to situations in which men feel the power to lay claim.

“He has flat out told me that if he says that he has slept with 200 women, that [number] may still not be all. ... yet if he finds out I’m speaking to others[men], he gets jealous.” - Selene

“He says to me that I can’t tell him anything, but he’s kind of machista because he still feels able to tell me something.” – Maya

Irrespective of the non-committal and non-monogamous nature of these sexual encounters, these men display certain attitudes and behaviors demonstrating a sense of ownership over their sexual partners. In turn, the participants expressed not feeling able to comment or make any claims on the man’s sexual activities with other women. Machismo has allowed men to police women’s

sexuality while they themselves are open to having sexual intercourse with multiple women, if possible. A way this has presented in this study is that men in committed monogamous relationships or marriages participate in arrangements of casual sex.

Five of the fourteen participants in this study expressed being in such sexual arrangements, some spanning several years.

“We messed around for some time, and yeah afterwards not anymore because he is married and that’s not nice.” – Valentina

“...but at the end of the day I do somewhat low-key respect his relationship, I guess.” – Carla

The participants divulged that some of their encounters have been with men that are married or in relationships. Valentina explained that she matched with a married man on Tinder, and it blossomed into a friend with benefits situation. Carla explained that she arranges her meeting with the man in a manner that prevents his girlfriend from finding out. In general, the respondents explained the purely sexual nature of their agreement.

They’ve felt sexually pleased by them and came to a sort of arrangement in which they schedule these encounters on a semi-regular basis. However, this situation does present scenarios in which certain men appear to have acquired several willing women to provide them with time, attention, and sex at times that may be most convenient for them. In return, a single woman adjusts their expectations or needs around the resources (i.e. time or sex) leftover from the man’s ‘official’ (public) relationship.

4.2 Empowerment in detachment

The experiences and viewpoints expressed during the interviews suggest a move away from the traditional value of sex as accompanying romantic love and long-term commitment. Casual sex, such as a ‘friends with benefits’ arrangement, is presented as a viable option for people seeking to fulfill their sexual needs without the accompanying weight of a romantic relationship. The participants choose to engage in casual sex with different men and in ways that may be most sensible for their lifestyle.

“So, I’ve made it my goal to be as straight forward as I can because I don’t believe in wasting people’s time or wasting my own time. So I would, if I’m talking to somebody already I would casually throw it in there like ‘you know what, I’m going to be honest with you, I find you very attractive and you sexually arouse me. Do you think we can hook up or whatnot because I’m not looking for a relationship right now?’ So for me it’s just like, lets hook up, it’s a one-time thing.” – Simone

“I refer to casual sex as ‘dick appointments’. I book my dick appointments like everyone would book their doctors appointment or their bank appointment. It is just an appointment, so in my opinion it’s like a mutual agreement that when I want pleasure or when I need pleasure I will contact you and book that appointment.” - Carla

The ease in which to determine not only the when, where or who, but most importantly the end stage of the engagement. Casual sex is presented as an option that enables women’s ownership and exploration of their sexual desires.

“After getting out of a 7-year relationship and you’ve gone through so much trauma and gone through so many things, at a certain point you just want to have fun again. You want to get to know other people, you want to know how it feels with other people...” - Thalia

“I enjoy it [casual sex], I’m not going to lie. I really enjoy it because you learn things too. Like one thing I’ve learned for the first time in my life is that I can have an orgasm from oral.” - Isabel

“Finally meeting someone who makes you cum, that’s one.... When you find someone that actually cares to treat you good and not just that it is ‘bang, bang’ and done.” - Silvia

Isabel explained that her sexual experiences and maturity has allowed her to get to know her body and become more confident in stating what she wants to try out sexually. Casual sex can be grounds for exploring one’s body and the ways different people can make you feel. Throughout the interviews, it became obvious the role that social networking websites have played in providing women a marketplace for sex. By connecting them with potential sexual partners, these websites or applications allow women to narrow down and filter their available options.

“It starts off with a ‘hi’ message. Like literally ‘hi’ and then they’ll be like ‘hi’ back. Then I’ll be like ‘up for some fun?’. That is it, I do not beat around it because that is like I think giving people false hope you know? False pretenses, like that you actually care. No, I don’t care. I just want dick and that is it.” - Pamela

Social media removed some of the traditional boundaries or rules of engagement. The participants do not all necessarily message their potential sexual interests directly. However, they do express using these platforms to gauge the interest of the men they are eyeing.

“So suddenly I got a like on my Facebook, it was him. I was like ‘huh, what? Okay’ I kept thinking about it for days. He didn’t send me a [friend] request, but I saw him. He attracted me, I found him handsome. I sent the friend request. So, what I did, was start posting in my stories. I put stories that are a little raunchy”. - Selene

Selene gave a brief example of how she gauges a man’s interest. In this case after posting some sexy pictures the man reacted to them, the conversation moved to WhatsApp where intimate photos were exchanged using the ‘view once’ feature, and then plans were made to meet up in person.

4.3 Reputation management as modus operandi

Discretion remains one of the most important considerations while participating in casual sexual encounters or arrangements. Their concern for privacy remains a crucial aspect. While reputation has not been explicitly mentioned as a point of concern, it was definitely an underlying component. A strategy espoused to mitigate potential risk for reputational damage has been selectivity when it comes to having casual sex with men.

“Everyone knows everyone, so you have to be really picky and choosy.” - Naomi

“Yes, you need to be very cautious of who you're sleeping with, I’m not talking about like STDs or something like that. STDs are one thing, but the mouths on these men is

like another. Like if you thought that women gossip about their sexual experiences or that women gossip in general, these men are worse than women.” – Pamela

Aruba is a small close-knit community, and there is the belief (and fear) that one’s private sexual activities can easily find itself as part of the rumor mill. Being selective in who you allow yourself to be sexually vulnerable with may relieve some of the worries. Thalia provided an example of a situation in which a man had bragged to his friends about their private sexual matters.

“Yes, it has happened to me. I hooked up with a guy, a guy that I knew. He went and told his bros about it. Suddenly all of them started sending me messages on WhatsApp. They started being like, not that I would go with them, but very fast they felt like they’ve found a girl they could [easily] take to bed, and they quickly spread the word.” - Thalia

Having ‘your story’ out there leaves a mark on your reputation and a label to your name. Aruba does not allow one to move through spaces in anonymity, therefore this threat feels even more pronounced.

“I would want to say sometimes that it would make it difficult for them [women] to find a partner afterwards on the island.” – Naomi

“In most cases a lot of guys still consider it as impure and disgusting that a woman has slept with more than one guy.” – Simone

A woman’s relationship prospects become limited because men write off women that been deemed sexually promiscuous. Such women are not given serious consideration in regard to a long-term commitment.

4.4 Sexual precariousness and seeking safety in familiarity

Single women pursuing casual sex are essentially navigating a minefield. This pursuit is not without risk for their reputations, their physical health, and personal safety. Therefore, strategies ensuring a certain degree of protection or risk mitigation is adopted. The ‘unknown’ can be more intimidating than what (or who) is already familiar. Throughout the interview the participants repeatedly addressed this tactic.

“I do tend to lean back on old partners, why find a new thing when you can call up an old one? They already know you and you don’t have to make an introduction.” – Carla

They consciously decide that it is safer to engage with men they have a previously established connection with, such as a friend or a past sexual partner. This was a phenomenon that introduced the study to some complexity, considering that in most cases these purported non-romantic casual arrangements spanned several years where a single woman had a casual arrangement with a singular person.

“On my side, I don’t seek other people [for sex]. On his side, I can’t vow for him. I just hope not.” - Imani

‘Familiarity’ apparently serves to vouch for the sexual partner’s health and character. Additionally, a man that maintains modest and restrained composure is also considered less risky of a sexual partner. Men that are outright boasting of their sexual experiences, or whom are conspicuous in their ‘philandering’ ways are considered an unsafe potential sexual partner. It is believed that

these men may be more likely to engage in risky sex (i.e. unprotected sex) with multiple women. Thalia provides an example of a situation in which she carefully retells how she observes a man's interaction and presentation in social situations.

“Here in Aruba, a guy that is ‘con cu ta’ for me is a guy that is loud. He must be for everyone, and he must be around a lot of women, for him that is like ‘he’s the bomb’. Like he’s everything, and those guys just turn me off.” - Thalia

“Do you mean that he’s ‘been’ everywhere already?” – Interviewer

“You can’t tell me you’ve been around all those women and have not taken any one of them to the bathroom with you, you know? I’ve experienced that, and at the end the guy was like ‘hey, I find you hot’. No, you’ve already turned me off. But a quiet guy, just sitting at the bar and I can ask him for a drink and we get talking. Then it is fine if we end the night at his house or my house.” - Thalia

There is no adequate word to translate the Papiamentu concept of ‘con cu ta’ in English, however, it can be described as a personal quality suggesting unpredictability, crassness, and unkempt presentation. Thalia feels safer in interacting with a man that displays a more reserved character. In the context of machismo and the hyper-masculine traits it cultivates, these are some of the characteristics placed under scrutiny when determining who may be assumed a worthy undertaking. In general, the participants expressed concern for their sexual health on account of men’s reputation for sexual risk taking.

“I don’t go with different guys...I don’t know, I’m thinking right now there are a lot of diseases and that is very common, especially for men. They just go with different women and that scares me. I think ‘oh, shit’. I believe I have to really know someone well or get to know them before sleeping with them.” - Maya

“There are a lot of diseases around right now. That is something I am very scared of...yeah, they [men] don’t worry. Like ‘what happens happens, YOLO.’”- Imani

The sexual privileges men possess has been apparent and repeatedly addressed by every participant. Their misuse of these privileges has become a point of concern, resulting in women’s general hesitation to the idea of having sex with several different men. Furthermore, it also appears that spiritual hygiene is growing in significance.

“I believe that men come with their ‘ghost of vaginas past’ and I don’t want all that energy in me, so I’m very picky of the penis that I receive. That is why I do Yoni steaming as well, to get rid of bad omens from their [the male sexual partner’s] past sex life. Ain’t nobody got time for that, so I’m very protective of me as a whole, my vagina and my energy” – Carla

“I find sex to be an exchanging of energy, so you can’t have sex with just anyone.” - Isabel

“I just decided that I rather be spiritual than religious. I mean, I’m very cautious of who I have sex with right now because of the spiritual exchange in everything, the energy exchange.” – Pamela

It is considered in poor spiritual hygiene to mindlessly engage in sexual activity with a man because it is believed to introduce negative spiritual or energetic forces into your body. Besides the concerns regarding the health and spiritual risks associated with casual sex, the danger of encountering a potentially unpredictable man is an additional concern women have to grapple with. A way that they attempt to mitigate the potential danger of meeting an unknown man is by informing their friends of their location or meeting in a safe space. Simone explained that she prefers meeting these men at her best friend's bar where she can be in sight of someone familiar. Selene mentioned that she does tend to share her location with her friends as a safety measure. On certain occasions Selene has even told her mother the exact names of the men and the location she would be at, in case anything goes awry. Despite the precautions taken, participants have described some of the harmful attitudes displayed by men they initially trusted. Silvia recounted instances in which men she has been casually having sex with becoming obsessive, feeling entitled to her body, and threatening to discard of her birth control.

“They get really stuck on people. Like, Aruban men love to act like because they got it, that they own you.” – Silvia

In other instances, men have unfortunately gone as far to attempted to coerce women or have outright sexually violated them. Naomi and Thalia expressed a similar scenario in which they have faced physically intimidating conduct. They described witnessing a man getting visibly upset when they expressed their desire to not have sex or to stop having sex. Naomi explained that after having drinks with a man, he did not appear respecting of her decision to not have sex.

“So I pulled the celibacy card, and he got like upset but he still [tried]. I was like ‘let’s go, I’m done’, he was upset and I was like ‘no, you have to take me home’, this is done.”- Naomi

After that experience Naomi never spoke to the man again and ignores his messages. In Thalia's case she explained that while she initially consented to having sex, the man ignored her requests for him to be gentler with her. When she eventually told him, she wishes to stop he attempted to intimidate her into staying and continuing.

“He was really really rough with me. Sometimes I like rough, but it has to be in a normal manner. When I told him that, he got really angry and started throwing things. He said ‘you’re not leaving!’. I was like ‘no, I’m going home. We do not have anything together and if you do not open the door I will cause a scene right here and call the police, the choice is yours.’”- Thalia

These were two instances in which the women were able to leave or escape mostly physically unscathed, however, not everyone is that fortunate. Tamara recounted an instance in which a man did not stop and did not listen to her.

“I was basically begging him to stop, but he didn’t get the message.” – Tamara

She repeatedly begged the man to stop, but he ignored all pleas and simply continued until he was done. Despite the methods that the participants adopted to protect themselves while still being able to explore their own sexual desires, the risk of serious physical and/or psychological harm remains.

4.5 ‘Sex’ as scariest tale (n)ever told

Growing up most participants expressed that their parents had not talked or explained to them the methods to protect their bodies from pregnancy when becoming sexually active. Although it is reasonable that these parents may have had their concerns about ‘teen pregnancy’, they did not make it a point of healthy discussion.

“My mom is a person that is very quiet and fearful, so she did not have the courage to speak about certain topics. I don’t know if it’s because she is embarrassed or simply was raised to be very quiet.” - Hannah

“Barely, none to be honest. I barely got the menstruation talk. They just told me, I don’t even remember what they said. They told me to just make sure I don’t get pregnant, so to stay away [from boys].” - Valentina

“Never, I’ve always had to figure everything out by myself. So, mom of the year.” – Silvia

It is worth noting that Valentina was pregnant by 17, and Silvia’s sister became pregnant at 14. Fortunately, schools have done basically all the ‘heavy lifting’ in regard to educating children on methods of protection. However, cash strapped teenagers without their own mode of transportation may not have the means to independently purchase contraceptives. So, either parents completely ignored ‘sex’, or they presented information to their children in an exaggerated or skewed manner.

It is unclear what the exact intentions behind parents employing scare tactics. It may stem from their own genuine fears, considering that these parents witnessed the HIV/AIDS crisis around the time their children were being born. Yet, the cultural values of marianismo also suggest that there is an element of convenience in leading your daughters to fear and alienation towards their own sexual desires. Parents’ amplification of the risks while minimizing the protective methods available and their refusal to provide their daughters with these methods, is harmful.

“When they found out I was busy [sexually], or that I’m already in it then they were like ‘oh you should protect your body, there are diseases’, but not that they spoke to me about what yes or what no.”- Maya

“When I got my first boyfriend, they [parents] were making a whole lot of issues about it. My mom even kept pestering me about getting tested for STDs and everything.” – Silvia

Silvia explained that when she got her first boyfriend, a period that ideally should have been exciting for her, resulted in her mother actually forcing her to go get tested for STDs. For other participants it was implied that their parents’ religious beliefs were a cardinal part of the messages they received around sex. In few instances sex was explicitly mentioned as an activity reserved for marriage. In other scenarios the information was simply incomplete.

“That it’s [sex] not something ‘all that’. I can even tell you that they raised me to believe women’s pleasure didn’t even matter. I can tell you that the first time I had an orgasm, I was like ‘damn, I want this any time and as much as I can get it’. They’ve just always put it in my head that it is just about baby making and never about pleasure.” - Selene

None of the participants suggested that their parents explicitly expressed sex as being 'sinful', yet sex was not painted in a favorable light either. Very few participants were able to fondly recount the manner that their parents, particularly their mother, spoke to them on how they can have safe sex and provided them the resources for it.

4.6. Leaving sex at the door

Nearly all the participants of this study live with their family members. As adult single sexually active women, this living situation may pose certain challenges. In general, much of the discussions surrounding the possibility of having casual sex in one's own home as not ideal. 'Respect' for the home was discussed much more as a point of concern, than 'privacy' was.

"But respect wise, I respect the fact that it is his [her father's] house and he never wants people inside the house. – Silvia

This is not to suggest that casual sex does not happen in their home, but it does in more secretive ways.

"No, I think I need to have a little respect for my mother. But I do it secretly, so when she goes to work. Back then I used to do shift work, so when I worked 7 to 3 or I worked 12 to 8.... he would come to my house in the morning, and then we'd sleep, have sex and everything before I go to work." - Maya

"Lately, it has been happening at midnight when everyone's asleep. Thank God I have my own room." – Imani

"I still don't find it so nice, because it is their [parents] house. Maybe if its midnight and they are asleep then yeah because they wouldn't notice." - Isabel

Moreover, the women of this study that are mothers have an added challenge in keeping their sexual partner away from the sight of their child. They've explained that is was a conscious decision made so as to not confuse them or lead them to believe that the man would become a stable or long-term part of their lives.

"I live with my parents and my child, so home is to always be respected even though it is not my home. My child is there and they are to be respected... and my child does not need to see that. I don't think it is a good example. For a kid I don't think it's good for them to constantly see different people coming home." - Valentina

Nearly all of the participants expressed feeling much more comfortable to have their sexual rendezvous outside the home, out of privacy and out of respect for their family members in the home. Sex was implied to be an activity mainly reserved for outside of the domain of the home.

"So most of the time it's going to be in someone's car, or we would get in a motel, like the 20\$ for 1 hour. Or by the beach...If they live alone, and if they are comfortable with it and their okay with it then yes. Because I very much prefer a bed."- Simone

"I live alone, but I have a rule that if you are not my partner, you are not allowed in my house. That's my golden rule, so usually my casual sex is either adventures [outdoors] or we end up at the apartments." – Naomi

The most popular place to have sex has been in the car. In most of the cases the male sexual partner also lives with their family. The participants also implied that they do not necessarily feel comfortable going over to the man's place either. The second most mentioned location has been 'apartments'. These are not traditional apartments meant for housing, but clandestine places that provide rooms to rent by the hour. They are rooms with A/C, a shower, and in certain instances a discrete space to park your car. These 'apartments' are found all over the island and their locations shared through word of mouth by their patrons.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The results have provided a sketch of the space that single women on Aruba navigate in regard to their pursuit for casual sex. It is a space where female sexual freedom is highly policed.

Marianismo's values regarding the ideal woman as a beacon of martyrdom and sexual purity does have its impact, yet it is also clear that sex occurs regularly and clandestinely. Although religiosity has not explicitly appeared as one of the most obvious elements of influence, the beliefs espoused fall in line with the same moral obligations of marianismo. It is a remnant of a time when institutional power has largely been in the hands of men. However, the contemporary cultural and material conditions interrupt some of the usual traditional beliefs surrounding family formation and marriage. This reality has led to adult Aruban women resorting to practically 'teenage-esque' conduct, where they need to sneak around so that it is not revealed to their families that they are sexually active.

Sex has been relegated to the domain of cars or apartments mainly out of a fear of disrespecting family, a phenomenon common for multigenerational homes. Lin* (2008) considers this a redrawing of the public and the private, where women place casual sex as a part of the outer sphere of their lives. It is "...something to be kept in the public sphere and differentiated from the intimacy or privacy of the home." (Lin*, 2008, p.45). Here "...the family home is both a 'resource' and 'constraint'" (Gorman-Murray, 2012, p.153), where sex that is considered socially unacceptable is rejected (e.g. casual sex, non-heterosexual sex, etc.). Furthermore, it could be stated that marianismo's contribution to this situation is the infantilization of women, where women's activities are surveilled and put up for discussion. This occurs not only in the family setting, but in the community at large. Maintaining a pristine reputation when it comes to sexual purity (Carranza, 2018), opens women up to public scrutiny. Being branded as a slut and having rumors regarding your private sexual matters out in the ether, impacts future interactions. Relationship prospects and the way men feel entitled to treat you (Stevens, 1973), are only a few ways the damage manifests.

Furthermore, in recent years there's been a move away from traditional religion and towards more general spirituality. Women come to see their bodies as a space that keeps 'spiritual score', particularly on the nature of their sexual interactions. One must question if the repackaging of sexual activity in this way does not serve to uphold the same values promoted by marianismo. Here, more women than men, would forgo or strictly police their own sexual activity out of a desire to remain as 'clean' as possible. This results in the mirroring of some of the same messages espoused by religious ideologies regarding sexual purity. However, there are still many women taking ownership of their sexuality and practicing the agency they have to do what they wish. Sex is seen as a delicious activity to partake in, where one may experiment and explore new things and new people.

Social media has facilitated these activities by allowing women to connect with the men they find sexually desirable. Here they can directly communicate what they want and when. Despite these unconventional attitudes towards sex, machismo works as an element to disrupt these developments. In the Aruban machista context, men have been thrust into fulfilling roles that consider domination and sexual virility as important markers of manhood (Mosher & Tomkins,

1988), and this proves costly for women. Despite women's best efforts in keeping themselves safe, men have remained the primary element of danger when it comes to casual sexual encounters. Men have been described in manners coinciding with seminal literature, suggesting that they are a risk on several levels. They have been considered a danger for one's sexual health (Endendijk et al., 2019), physical safety (Bakare-Yusuf, 2013), and for some even spiritual sanctity. Though one may practice sexual agency and feel empowerment to a certain degree, it is an experience that is situated within a larger context of machista sexual repression (Meenagh, 2017).

In conclusion, single women in Aruba who partake in casual sexual encounters with men find themselves navigating a perilous landscape. There are two forces aiding the sexually precarious position that these women are in. Parents or general caregivers may have been 'well-intentioned' in attempting to scare their daughters away from sex, but it did not serve to stop them from having sex. It resulted in a failure to arm these women with resources to be able to facilitate their safety and the communication skills required for healthy sexual practices. On the other hand, the normalization of marianismo's beliefs regarding what a 'good' woman is supposed to be (Stevens, 1973), and machista entitlement has led to men policing women into conforming to these ideals regarding 'respectability' (Torres et al., 2002). In turn, the silence and shame surrounding women's sexuality has further amplified these women's sexual precariousness. It has only served to push sexual activities further 'underground', in spaces where the potential for victimization may be even greater. In instances where sexual violence does occur, it tends to go unarticulated in spaces where even consensual sex is in itself a taboo.

Although this study has been of a small-scale, it is one of the first proper attempts in investigating female sexuality on Aruba. The interviews conducted facilitated the collection of personal experiences on a rather sensitive subject matter. The data received provided critical insight on the sexual agency exercised by women in Aruba navigating a context rife with sexual double standards, where machismo and marianismo shape every encounter. However, a limitation of the study may be the emphasis placed on the sexual dynamics between men and women. It may be that non-heterosexual pairings could provide differing results. The hope is for further research to be conducted on the subject of sex and sexuality in the Dutch Caribbean.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Interview guide

(Themes – Casual sex, Aruba, Marianismo & Machismo)

1. How do you think casual sex is perceived in Aruba?
2. Is this different for women or men in Aruba?
3. What is your own perspective on casual sex and the potential differences between men and women?
4. How does this play a role in your life?
5. Do you engage in casual sex?
 - a) Or have you engaged in casual sex, and can you tell me more on how this went for you?
 - b) Where did this take place?
6. How does this relate to your living situation?
 - a) Do you still live with the family perhaps?
 - b) How does this play a role in your sex life?

(Themes – Casual sex, sexual agency, and the family)

7. How do you communicate or show someone that you are interested in being physical or sexual with them?
8. Do you voice your wants or needs or set limits with dates regarding physical touch or sexual experiences?
9. How would you describe the family structure of your childhood home?
10. How would people in your family react to you having casual sex?
11. How would your larger social environment react to you having casual sex?
12. 10. What messages did you receive from your parents about sex?
13. 11. What messages did you receive from your parents about being or not being a woman who is independent?

Demographic information

- Age
- Religion
- Income? SES
- Children y/n
- Sexual orientation
- Education

Closing remarks

Is there anything else you would like me to know or that I have not asked about?

Appendix 2.

Demographic information

	Age	Religion	SES	Sexual Orientation	Education	Children
<i>Participant 1</i>	31	n/a	Middle Class	Heterosexual	MBO	no
<i>Participant 2</i>	29	Catholic	Upper middle class	Heterosexual	HAVO	no
<i>Participant 3</i>	26	Catholic	Middle class	Heterosexual	LBO	yes
<i>Participant 4</i>	26	Spiritual	Middle class	Bisexual	MBO	no
<i>Participant 5</i>	28	Catholic	Upper middle class	Bisexual	MAVO	no
<i>Participant 6</i>	31	Spiritual	Middle class	Heterosexual	MBO	yes
<i>Participant 7</i>	35	Catholic	Middle class	Heterosexual	HAVO	yes
<i>Participant 8</i>	37	Spiritual	Upper middle class	Bisexual	Bachelor's	yes
<i>Participant 9</i>	29	Catholic	Middle class	Heterosexual	MBO	yes
<i>Participant 10</i>	28	Catholic	Middle class	Heterosexual	HAVO	no
<i>Participant 11</i>	35	n/a	Middle class	Heterosexual	HAVO	no
<i>Participant 12</i>	34	n/a	Middle class	Heterosexual	Bachelors	yes
<i>Participant 13</i>	33	Wiccan	Middle class	Heterosexual	HAVO	no
<i>Participant 14</i>	29	n/a	Middle class	Heterosexual	Bachelors	no

Appendix 3.

Interview Research - Information Sheet (English)

Researcher Information

Name: Mandy Lacle
E-mail: 522884ml@student.eur.nl
Phone number: +297 6629321
Institution name: Erasmus University Rotterdam
Erasmus School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

As a participant in this study, you have the right to:

- I. Decline or withdraw your consent at any moment during the interview or research process
- II. Refuse to answer any particular interview question
- III. Request access to your data (e.g. audio file and/or interview transcription)
- IV. Request for the rectification or removal of certain interview information
- V. Contact EUR in case of any complaints or concerns during the research process

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and anonymous.

Purpose of the Research

This is a research project from the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR) for the ‘Social Inequalities’ master. The aim of the study is to investigate the experiences of women in regards to their sexual encounters. This is done in an attempt to understanding the sexual freedoms afforded to women in Aruba.

Privacy and Anonymity

For this study interviews will be audio recorded, if the participant permits this. All information (i.e. data) acquired through the interviews will be processed using pseudonyms and will omit any information that may be considered identifiable (e.g. names of people, places, dates, etc.).

Audio files from recorded interviews will be stored in a EUR approved password protected cloud storage system. This data will be accessible to the researcher and their thesis supervisor dr. Samira van Bohemen. The data acquired will solely be used for the purpose of the above mentioned research project. Upon completion of this study, all data will be destroyed.

Participants are able to withdraw their participation from the study at any moment before July, 2022.

In the case of further inquiries, contact:

EUR - Data Protection Officer at privacy@eur.nl for questions pertaining to your data

EUR – Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Samira van Bohemen at vanbohemem@essb.eur.nl regarding questions or concerns pertaining to the researcher

Appendix 4.

CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: 'The Politics of Sex: An analysis of Marianismo and sexual double standards in Aruba'

Name, email of student: Mandy J.J. Laclé, 522884ml@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Dr. Samira van Bohemen, vanbohemmen@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 20/03/2022 until 20/06/2022

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

- If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO

2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO

3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - NO
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - NO

Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO

Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO

Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO

Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO

Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

The subject matter may run the risk of touching upon more negative events entailing issues of stigma, shame and trauma. This study consists of interviewing single women in Aruba on their casual sex lives. These are private and delicate matters that need to be treated with sensitivity and discretion. Aruba consists of a tight knit small scale community, thus this context amplifies the sensitive nature of the study.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

An informational document (*see appendix I*) stating the rights of the participants will be provided to them and also read verbatim by the researcher prior to requesting the participants explicit verbal consent for their participation. (It must be stated that this study forgoes the use of a written consent form, so to avoid the accumulation of a paper trail during the course of the study. This is a decision made to further protect the participants' personal information. This may serve to provide the participants more ease in discussing their experiences candidly with the researcher.)

Their rights consist of the freedom to deny and withdraw their participation at any stage of the research. It is also important to note that the participants will be informed of their ability to skip questions that may be too laden with traumatic experiences or that elicit negative emotional reactions. The utmost efforts will be made by the researcher to be as transparent as possible with the participant in order to avoid any form of exploitation to unintentionally occur.

Moreover, they will also be informed of the manner that their interview data (i.e. audio files) will be securely stored, anonymously processed (i.e. omitting possibly identifiable personal information such as names, dates, workplace, address), and the transcriptions and audio files will be destroyed after the thesis has been finalized.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

No, not to my present knowledge. My planned research approach intends to be exhaustive in mitigating these possibilities.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable. Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

The data collection will take place in Aruba, and taken from transcriptions of audio recorded interviews with single women.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

The research anticipates a sample of approximately 12 women.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

The population relevant for this study entails women between the ages of 20 – 39 living on Aruba. Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, Aruba) accounted at the end of 2020 the total population of women was 58,483. The sample population relevant for this study (ages 20-39) consisted of 13686 women.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

During the course of the thesis project the data will be stored on the One-Drive platform approved and provided by Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I, the research, Mandy J.J. Laclé, is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data acquired.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

The data will be backed up at the minimum on a weekly basis to ensure short-term data security.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

The researcher will be tactful in processing the data in a manner that omits the participants' personal information or any information that may be considered identifiable. Pseudonyms will be used as an alternative for actual names. Other possibly identifiable information of events that mentions names, dates, specific places (e.g. workplaces, churches or other places of affiliation) will be omitted.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: **Mandy J.J. Laclé**

Name (EUR) supervisor:

Date: **11/03/2022**

Date: 17-03-2022

