

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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SEEKING FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS IN A TOURISM-BASED SEXUAL  
ECONOMY: INTERROGATING THE GAMBIAN SEXSCAPE

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by

Mariama Jaiteh

2018

To: Dean John F. Stack  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Mariama Jaiteh, and entitled Seeking Friends with Benefits in a Tourism-Based Sexual Economy: Interrogating The Gambian Sexcape, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommendation that it be approved.

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Roderick Neuman

---

Vrushali Patil

---

Heather Russell

---

Mark Padilla, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 20, 2018

The dissertation of Mariama Jaiteh is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

---

Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2018

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## DEDICATION

To Bassirou Jean and Kazady Yusuf

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
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by

Mariama Jaiteh

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Professor Mark Padilla, Major Professor

This dissertation engages with the driving motivations behind the actions of all those involved in The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy: the Gambian and other West African male and female sex workers, the Global North (habitually European) male and female tourists, the Gambian and expatriate Lebanese bar and restaurant owners, the Gambian state, and the semesters (members of the Gambian diaspora on vacation in The Gambia). It presents thick ethnographic accounts of interactions with Gambians and tourists, as they form temporary couples or friendships for the duration of tourists' vacations, and sometimes for longer. This ethnography-rich dissertation pays careful attention to Gambian voices, which have been somewhat marginalized in the limited literature on sex tourism in The Gambia. It theorizes the existence of a Gambian sexscape, within which socio-sexual scripts are performed. The socio-sexual scripts that make the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy are re-located within Gambian society's larger sexscape, which allows for a better consideration of the wider socio-economic, cultural, and political processes that have led to the formation of contemporary Gambian society.

The dissertation briefly outlines The Gambia's political and economic history, which explains the ongoing economic dependency and the importance of emigration for contemporary Gambian youth who want to escape the abject poverty in which too many live. It proposes a descriptive analysis of the Gambian sexscape and its socio-sexual scripts. Greater precision is given to the socio-sexual scripts that make the tourism-based sexual economy: chanters and white Global North female tourists; Gambian female sex workers and white Global North male tourists; Gambian men who have sex with Gambian men/semesters, and/or with white Global North male tourists.

Finally, I adopt a socio-ecological approach to sexual health and examine the tourism-based sexual economy's impact on the country's sexual health.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CSW	Commercial Sex Worker
FSW	Female Sex Worker
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HARRP	HIV/AIDS Rapid Response Project
MARPs	Most-At-Risk Populations
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
MSW	Male Sex Worker
NAC	National AIDS Council
NACP	National AIDS Control Program
NAS	National AIDS Secretariat
TDA	Tourist Development Area
TSU	Tourism Security Unit

## INTRODUCTION

I was born in Banjul and grew up in Bakau New Town, The Gambia—the country upon which this dissertation focuses. Growing up in Bakau in the 1980s allowed me to witness first-hand the changes brought about by the development of the tourism industry in The Gambia. Although I was not really aware then of what was really going on between the young Gambians and the Global North tourists—mostly from European countries—they were hanging out with, I clearly remember being intrigued by the strange and noticeable “couples” they made as they moved about some of the public spaces in which I was also transiting. My bewilderment did not come only from the obvious age difference between them (foreigners are typically older than locals), and the somewhat obvious intimate relationship they seemed to have, it also came from the many warnings to stay away from tourists given by my middle-class grand-parents, uncles and aunts, who repeated these admonitions to my cousins and I as we played outside and went to places in and out of the neighborhood. To make it in life, we were told, one must carry oneself with respect and should never be seen doing “disrespectful things,” as a young girl, I understood this to mean not being seen as an “easy girl” with no home training. In The Gambia, young girls whether living in urban or rural areas are made to understand very early in life that their existential value lies in people’s perception of them being “respectable young women,” which meant young women who preserved their virginities. My female cousins and I could not wander around in the “Tourism Development Area” (TDA), which mostly corresponds to the Kombo St. Mary District. From my grandfather’s perspective, children who come from good families are not to be seen hanging around the tourism areas,

especially girls. You do not want to be seen as an “easy girl,” as a potential “prostitute” or *chaga*. One’s own reputation was something that we were taught to protect at all cost for the greater good of yourself and your extended family.

The Gambia, as Isatou Touray (2006) aptly puts it, is a society characterized as “patriarchal and gerontocratic,” in which both age and gender hierarchies are embedded in “traditional” practices, and in Islam, the dominant religion practiced by 95.6% of the population (Touray 2006). Despite living in a majority Islamic society, Gambian women are not subjected to strict forms of seclusion as one could find in parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia, where very strict and conservative interpretations of Islam are common, and in which men and women are separated in public spaces. In The Gambia, it is not required that women wear a hijab before entering public space. Women may also move about without a male escort, even though men are favored and allowed or expected to exercise power over women and girls (Touray 2006; Chant and Touray 2012). There is no doubt that The Gambia shares with many other muslim societies a religious understanding that favors boys over girls, where men are given greater recognition and privilege over women and girls, which foster an environment where girls and women are made to live with gender discrimination and male privilege as a given from a young age. Gambian constructs of gender, sex and sexuality are embedded in an Islamic framework that only recognize the possibility of heterosexual and heteronormative marriages, notions of desire, and pleasure. Anything that exists outside of that framework is posited as outside of the norms and risks social stigmatization, and criminalization. This brings women and men to remain silent about same-sex sexuality, which gives an illusion of homosexual “invisibility, and limits

knowledge production about sexual health, putting in peril many women and queer people.

Though as children, my female cousins and I didn't dare be seen in the TDA, we knew neighborhood boys who had jobs, or did hang out there. We were close to some of these young guys because a couple of them were renting small individual rooms my grandfather had built in the compound we lived in as a family. These two men worked in hotels. They would bring back bread and food from the hotels, which fascinated us. Not only that the hotel food was flavorful, we also found it to be extraordinary when compared to our ordinary house meals. So as children and later as teenagers, we were fascinated by the world of hotels, bars, and restaurants that cater to Global North tourists. Other neighborhood guys who also hung out with tourists would bring back things like a walk-man, a pair of sneakers, Marlboro cigarettes, foreign money, "blue movies" (pornographic films), an invitation to go to Europe from tourists they had served as guides and "friends." Little did we realize at the time that these neighborhood guys were engaging in what I refer to as the "tourism-based affective-sexual economy." The guys who didn't have relatives in the diaspora who could help cover the cost of a plane ticket and who did not have any other means to travel abroad looked at friendships with tourists as the only way out of the country to get a better life for themselves and their family.

Eventually, when I was 12 years old, my grandfather decided that it was time for me to join my mother in the United States and to further my education. So, in the Summer of 1990, I traveled to the United States with my grandfather to live with my mother and her new family in Miramar, Florida.

My research interest in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy actually began in 2009, when I returned to The Gambia as an adult, with my own family, for the first time after so many years (I was already the mother of my older boy, Bassirou). I remember being flabbergasted at the scene of young Gambians holding the hand of their much older white tourist friends in public view, in and around the Kombo St. Mary district. The many hotels, bars, restaurants constructed to cater to the always-growing number of tourists had further transformed the landscape. These scenes of public performances of affection between young Gambian men and older female tourists departed so much from what I remembered as a 12-year-old; these were much more explicit. This was so much the case that it sparked my interest to take advantage of the obligation to write a doctoral dissertation to seriously look into the matter. This led me to discover the scant scholarly literature on sex tourism in The Gambia, West Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa in general.

The Gambian-focused scholarly literature (Brown 1992, Ebron 2002; Lawson and Jaworski 2007; McCombes 200; Nyanzi et al. 2005; Nyanzi and Bah 2008) exclusively focuses on young Gambian men and their much older white, female, Global North tourist lovers. The landscape it depicts is devoid of Gambian women who also engage in the tourism-based sexual economy to offer affective and sexual services to older, Global North male tourists, and of “men who have sex with men” (MSM—the term most often used in public health literature to refer to the same-sex behavior of men who may or may not identify as “gay.” Throughout this dissertation, I struggled on which terminology to use with respect to same-sex sexuality and identity(ies). As an African woman educated in the Global North, I am very much aware of the scholarship on the constitutive

intersection of power and sexuality by Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and others. On the one hand, this literature has been useful for the making of my conceptual toolkit, however, on the other hand, I have been wondering at what point does genuflection to Global North queer theorists become a form of colonizing itself. Hence, instead of using a vocabulary that—although designed in the Global North to make sense of Global North realities—parades as a revelation of supposedly universal categories, I have decided to use a terminology based on the emic terms in use by my same-sex interlocutors, the ethnic terms used by the public health sector of The Gambia, and local terms such as *ibbi* (effeminate men), *yoos* (gentlemen, who are describe as “macho”) and *goor-gigeeen* (a derogatory and oppressive term meaning “man-woman”) when dealing with same-sex sexuality and identification processes. These terms reflects traditional gender social roles.

Another characteristic of this limited literature is that it was written by non-Senegambians not really fluent in Wolof or Mandinka, the two African languages the most spoken in The Gambia. The researchers’ attention mostly focused on those they could interact and communicate with more easily: the Global North male and female tourists. Progressively, but nonetheless surely, as I kept visiting the country about once a year and as I began conducting preliminary fieldwork in The Gambia, I realized how significant this absence of Gambian perspectives and Gambian voices in this limited literature was. That is when and how I decided to write a doctoral dissertation on the Gambian, tourism-based affective-sexual economy from the perspective of The Gambia, and Gambian women and men who participate in it with their only asset: their young and attractive black bodies, in a general context characterized by transnational racialization, Gambian economic dependency, abject poverty, and the plans of most Gambian youth to

get out of the country and migrate to Europe or the United States. While the existing scholarly literature has reverberated Global North tourists' voices, my dissertation wants to emphasize the centrality of the voices and perspectives of the Gambian men and women who have strategic sex with Global North male and female tourists. Indeed, while I invoke notions of "strategy," I aim in this dissertation to ground my analytic discussions in the complex and polyvalent voices and perspectives of Gambians themselves, and to extrapolate my interpretations from this foundation. Strategies are deployed by Gambians as they negotiate the economic, political, and social constraints in the Gambian sexscape and the tourism-based sexual economy embedded in it. The use of strategies by Gambians becomes part of a matrix where sexuality is used to form affective relationships with locals with more economic means and foreigners, to help ease poverty and to increase the chance to gain companionship and friendships.

This approach explains why I have chosen, in the ethnographic, analytical descriptions that follow—mostly in chapters 3 and 4—to adopt a writing strategy that embraces and gives access to these young Gambian voices and perspectives. That strategy is aligned with both the methodological and theoretical tools I have put together to ensure the consideration of Gambian contexts and perspectives. In final analysis, paying careful attention to local, national and transnational sociocultural, economic, and political contexts reveals that the choices made by young Gambians to participate in the tourism-based affective-sexual economy end up "fitting well" within the sociocultural, and socio-sexual logic of the larger Gambian sexscape. The tourism-based affective-sexual economy I discussed in this dissertation underscores the idea that the use of sexuality and the negotiation of access to one's young body serve as a bridge that binds

affect, economic support, and perhaps international migration for Gambian socio-sexual actors. This speaks to the fluidity of these entanglements and thus creates for the tourism-based affective-sexual economy to exist in and out of the larger sexscape. This requires delicate dances for Gambians both men and women to perform certain gender roles in alignment with Gambian socio-sexual norms, in moves that might also help minimize social stigmatization. This will hopefully explain my use of the notion of “socio-sexual scripts” for its adequate reference to socio-sexual processes and values at work in the larger Gambian sexscape, along with particular understanding of gender, sex, and sexuality.

As a kaleidoscopic view of the Gambian sexscape, this dissertation aims to reveal the particularities of the socio-sexual scripts that make the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy, replacing them within the larger set of socio-sexual scripts that make the wider Gambian sexscape. If we are to fully understand emic perspectives in the tourism-based affective-sexual economy, we absolutely must find ways to understand and embed the exchanges between tourists and locals within the larger local contexts of socio-sexual interactions, which I call “the Gambian sexscape.” Not doing so results in cutting-off the socio-sexual interactions between Global North tourists and locals from their immediate social environments – something anthropologists should avoid doing at all cost, even if only to better comprehend the subject matter at hand I have also carefully interviewed Global North male and female tourists, whose voices, as indicated, can also be heard in the existing literature and in blogs published on the World Wide Web with comments on their “sexual adventures” in The Gambia.

## **Research Setting and Methodology**

The Republic of The Gambia is a small West African country located on the two banks of the River Gambia. It is entirely surrounded by Senegal, except on its western coastline along the Atlantic Ocean (see Map 1.1). The small strip of land (11,300 km-long) makes it the highest urban population density on the African continent. The total population of the country is estimated to be 2.16 million (CIA 2018). The Gambian major ethnic groups include the Mandinka, the Fula, the Wolof, the Jola, the Serahule, the Serer, the Manjago, the Bambara, and the Aku. In 2018, the majority of Gambians identified as Muslim (95.7%), with a small Christian (4.2%) minority, and an even smaller proportion of Animists (it does happen that non-Muslim and non Christian rituals or beliefs are also held more or less privately by both Muslims and Christians). The Gambia has a youthful demographic structure, where 60% of the population is under the age of 25 (CIA 2018). It is ranked 151<sup>st</sup> out of 169 countries on the Human Development Index. The country's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and on the tourism industry. The inflow of remittances from diasporic Gambians working overseas amounts to about one-fifth of the country's GDP (CIA 2018). In general, the country is heavily indebted due in large part to the failing policies of the former authoritarian President, Yahya Jammeh, who looted the country and left it bankrupt. Many Gambians, especially the youth, face unemployment or underemployment. Their prospects for the future remain bleak.

As a native speaker of Wolof, I used ethnographic methods to gather the data I use as evidence to support my claims about The Gambia's sexscape and its tourism-based, affective-sexual economy. Wolof serves as lingua franca in The Gambia: most people, especially in "urban" settings where my fieldwork took place, spoke Wolof

regardless of their ethnic and linguistic background. In fact, in many cases my interlocutors preferred speaking in Wolof than in English, especially if they had limited education.

My fieldwork in The Gambia extended over 18 months from 2010 to 2017, including the periods of preliminary fieldwork. The research specifically targeted individuals representing different groups of socio-sexual actors and stakeholders involved in and around the tourism industry, and particularly its sexual economy. Through contacts already established and family connections, I conducted one-on-one formal and semi-formal in-depth interviews (in some cases extending over multiple days or even months) with Gambian female sex workers (20); Gambian male sex workers (25); Gambian MSM (8) who engage with tourists as opportunities arise; white European female tourists (4); white European male tourists (6); Gambian “semesters” (7 male and 3 females); and Lebanese Gambians (4). I will define each of these categories in detail in the course of this dissertation. I was able to conduct focus group sessions with Gambian and other West African female sex workers in two of the four brothels open in the Kombo at the time (12 and 7 women, respectively), one session in each brothel. I also conducted a group interview with six MSM. I conducted one-on-one informal interviews with individuals working in the tourism industry such as taxi drivers (5), bartenders (5), hotel and restaurant staff members (6), tour guides (4), fruit vendors (3), craft market sellers (5), security-guards (5). I also conducted semi-structured interviews with Gambians who are not involved in tourism or its sexual economy (5 women and 5 men). I conducted participant-observation in a variety of locations in the Kombo Saint Mary District, but particularly in 5 bars and 4 restaurants, all located either on Kololi beach or in the general

Senegambia strip—the main tourism nightlife hub of The Gambia. I interviewed a series of government officials working in relevant departments of the Ministry of Health, the Action AIDS Network, the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) in the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Tourism, the Gambian Tourism Board (GTB). I gathered information from relevant local and international newspapers, blogs, social media sites, and archival documents to triangulate my ethnographic data. I obtained extensive data about The Gambia’s tourism industry from the GTB and the World Tourism Organization (WTO). Almost all of my interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim with minimal editing to preserve authenticity. The transcribed interviews were then coded twice, which allowed for several themes to emerge. These emerging themes guided the organization of this work in chapters. All of the names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms given by my interlocutors or myself to protect their identities. I also changed, for the same reason, the names of bars, restaurants, and night-clubs.

I had several social interactions with research participants who were visiting the country, during meetings at homes, in markets, and at social events. This is particularly important because Gambian social life involves a series of greetings and interactions that serve to establish, define, maintain, and reinforce relationships. Semi-structured interviews with young Gambian men, for example, required me to participate in a ritual called *attaya* in Wolof, which involves a group of guys sitting around a portable charcoal burner, brewing Chinese green tea that is—when ready—shared among those in attendance in the midst of vivid conversations about anything and everything. These

conversations gave me invaluable information about lay concepts, and also clues about acceptable ways to deal with sensitive topics touching upon sex and sexual practices.

Conducting participant-observation in bars and night-clubs was tricky at times because the European men in those places automatically assumed that I was a sex worker available to them. Sometimes, I was stopped by security forces guarding the beaches. They asked for my ID as they do with the young women and young men who want to go to the beach at times when Gambians are required to have working credentials to frequent the beaches, so that those who will “bother” the tourists are kept at bay (see chapters 3 and 4). My multiple identities as a Gambian woman who wears locs, as a “semester” (Gambian from the diaspora) who lives in the United States, as a married woman (some of them met my husband), and as a mother (some of them saw my children) made it easy for “chanters”<sup>1</sup> (Gambian men working in the tourism-based sexual economy) to talk to me because they perceived me to be different from the local women, which—as I understand it—made it easier for them to open up and answer my many questions.

Conversations often got started with the chanter(s)—who, as I will explain in the following pages, often wore dread locs and Rastafarian paraphernalia—asking me if my locked hair was my natural hair. They usually liked my affirmative answer that yes, indeed, my locs are “natural.” I sometimes too had to answer questions about what it is like to live in America. The dream of many chanters was undoubtedly to leave the country. Conversations with Gambian and other West African women—which always

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<sup>1</sup> Chanters are Gambian men who make a living in the tourism-based sexual and affective economy. They are dedicated to exercising physically on a daily basis to tone their bodies up and enhance their “sex appeal.” When in the “backstage setting,” they rehearse phrases using different accents to find their most sensual voices and gazes as many strategies to gain female Global North tourists’ attention.

took place in the absence of men—unfolded a bit differently. The women tended to treat me as their semester sister, who is open-minded to talk about sex with and who will not judge you. My not residing in The Gambia facilitated the advent of perhaps “more open” conversations with my research participants. The fact that I would relatively soon thereafter leave the country and go back to the U.S. brought them the confidence that I would not spread what they shared with me locally—which is what mattered the most to them.

Another dimension of my fieldwork consisted in dealing with my relatives (my aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews). Those close enough to me to know what my research was about tended to constantly warn me and beg me to be careful, claiming that I should be avoiding the venues where the *chagas* (prostitutes) go so that “no one will think that you might be one.” As I discretely discuss on the side as we move along in this text’s arguments, I had simultaneously an insider and an outsider identities that allowed me to enter multiple spaces, and listen to a variety of more-or-less spontaneously provided confessional materials about aspects of my research participants’ sexual lives. The fact that I was a semester generally put my interlocutors at greater ease. I felt lucky to have so many opportunities to collect data.

### **Theoretical Framework**

My exposure to the literature on sex work and tourism coming out of the Caribbean with sophisticated approaches to the workings of race, gender, and sexuality in what has been called the “tourism-based sexual economy” has helped me a great deal. This work on the political economy of sexuality in tourism, and particularly the work of Mark Padilla (2007), Kamala Kempadoo (2004), Amalia Cabezas (2009), and Denise Brennan (2004)

have been foundational for the elaboration of the theoretical architecture of this dissertation. Interestingly, many of these useful ethnographic pieces derive from the Caribbean, with the Dominican Republic among the most dominant national context.

Transnational feminist theorizing (Alexander 2005; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Fernandes 2013; Grewal and Kaplan 1994) have provided fine conceptual tools, as is made obvious throughout the chapters.

The premise on which this dissertation's theoretical framework is elaborated can be found in my reflective comments earlier in this introduction: my stupefaction at the absence of Gambian voices and perspectives in previous research in the region (Ebron 2002; Lawson and Jaworski 2007; McCombes 2008; Nyanzi et al. 2005), and my theoretical and methodological determination to share that missing information that can only be reached by carefully paying attention to Gambian perspectives and voices. The theoretical framework informing my arguments fostered my capacity to reach this objective. In that theoretical framework, a number of central notions and concepts have analytical relevance.

I borrow from Brennan the notion of "sexscape," which she deploys in *What's Love Got to Do with It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic* (2004). Brennan understands the "sexscape" as including particularly two categories of social actors (the female sex workers and white male tourists) within the Dominican tourism sexual economy. Her use of the notion of "sexscape" doesn't really engage with the variety of (scripted) sexual practices and encounters that compose the landscape of socio-sexual practices in the Dominican Republic. Instead, her theorizing of

the sexscape is limited to the space she draws around the interactions between female sex workers and white male tourists, exclusively.

As made clear in this dissertation, although I borrow the notion from Brennan (2004), I do depart from her in the way I theorize the sexscape. Indeed, in this dissertation, the “sexscape” encompasses the set of socio-sexual norms and scripted practices in The Gambia, within which exists the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy. For me, the scope of the sexscape is much broader: it is understood as being at the scale of the entire Gambian society and as being much wider than the tourism-based affective-sexual economy. Defining the Gambian sexscape that way, and understanding the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy in terms of specific socio-sexual scripts performed within the larger Gambian sexscape, unavoidably contextualizes the realities I propose to re-construct in this text.

To sum up, the theoretical framework for this dissertation is centered on the existence of a “Gambian sexscape,” within which various socio-sexual scripts are enacted. In that way, the socio-sexual scripts that make the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy are contextualized, from a Gambian perspective, within the larger set of socio-sexual scripts characteristic of Gambian society. This approach is aligned with my theoretical disposition to analyze the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy considering the larger socio-economic and political processes that have led to the formation of contemporary Gambian society. My determination to avoid isolating the sexual encounters that take place within tourism between Global North tourists and Gambian and other West African sex workers from their immediate sociocultural and economic contexts and situations ultimately justifies my use of the concept of “socio-

sexual” relationships. It is my contention that sexual encounters never take place in a social vacuum and are always necessarily embedded within specific sociocultural realities of which fragments are carried along as sexual encounter(s) unfold, informing all its (their) aspects, even if—or perhaps particularly if—these encounters are made possible within a tourism-based sexual economy.

In the Gambian sexscape, I identified nine socio-sexual scripts, although I suspect that more could be identified. The scripts I have identified as constituting the Gambian sexscape are (in a random order): 1) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older European women and young Gambian and other West African men; 2) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older European men and young Gambian and other West African women; 3) the mostly same-sex MSM interactions between older European men, Gambian men, and Gambian “semesters” and young Gambian and other West African men; 4) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older Gambian men, and sometimes also older European expats (“sugar-daddies”) and young Gambian and other West African women (“sugar/honey-babies”); 5) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older Gambian women (*jigeg*) and young Gambian men (“toyboy”); 6) the active participation of Gambian men of Lebanese origin as pimps, brothel owners, and clients of Gambian sex workers; 7) Indian and Bangladeshi local businesses’ middle-managers who seek Gambian female sex workers in the rare local brothels catering to local Gambian men and in bars catering to global north tourists; 8) the mostly heterosexual socio-sexual encounters between local Gambian men and Gambian and other West African female sex workers in local brothels; 9) the mostly heterosexual socio-sexual encounters between Gambian male semesters and local Gambian women.

With its objective to provide a kaleidoscopic view of the Gambian tourism-based affective-sexual economy, this dissertation primarily focuses on the following scripts: heterosexual interactions between older Europeans (men and women) and young Gambian and other West African men and women; mostly same-sex and MSM interaction between older European, Gambian, and Gambian “semesters” men; sugar-daddies and sugar/honey-babies; Older Gambian women (*jigeg*) and young Gambian men (“toyboy”); Gambian semesters interactions with young local Gambians.

As revealed in this dissertation’s chapters, the Gambian sex work discussed is often “occasional, temporary, and strategic” in the sense that it often involves affectionate/emotional relationships developing with tourists over the duration of their entire stay. The sex work is occasional, temporary and strategic because it so happens that the many young Gambians who engage in sex work often also have another, generally low-paying job (e.g., security guard, supermarket employees, fruit vendors, massage therapists, restaurant servers, hotel workers, barmen and barmaid, etc.).

The notion of “socio-sexual” interactions, where sexual encounters are understood as always already implicating various aspects—race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, nationality, religion, etc.—of the local/transnational social orderings within which they unfold. It calls for necessary sociological and ethnographic contextualization. My use of “socio-sexual” in that way follows the work of other scholars who have used the notion (Gagnon and Simon 1973;Geller 2018;Maticka-Tyndale et al. 2005) to expressly emphasize how intertwined sex, sexuality, and sociocultural processes are. In The Gambia’s social structure and logic, relationships/friendships are grounded on affective and economic reciprocity. In Gambian society, it is for example accepted and expected

that intimacy is tied to practices of material and other exchanges by the individuals engaged in affective entanglements

The notion of “friendship” between tourists and Gambians provides the vocabulary that both Gambians and tourists use to talk about what they are doing with each other. It is only in the context of the brothels that the expression “sex workers” is actually in use. Neither the Gambians who get involved in the tourism-based sexual economy nor the Global North tourists would use the expression “sex work” to characterize what they do, or what they are looking for, this would go against Gambian socio-sexual practices and logic

### **Overview of the Chapters**

In Chapter 1, “Moving Out in Order to Move Up: A Brief Political and Economic History of The Gambia,” I outline the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial political and economic history of The Gambia. I trace the foundation of the Gambian economy and its subsequent reliance on agriculture and tourism. I present economic and demographic indicators, which reveals both a youthful population and acute poverty. The socio-demographic profile of The Gambia highlights the structural conditions behind many youths’ desire to emigrate to the Global North. This chapter uncovers the reasons why many opportunity-less young Gambian men and women engage in the tourism-based affective-sexual economy. It also explains why some of them decide to “take the backway” – the trans-Saharan voyage to Libya followed by the often fatal crossing of the Mediterranean Sea to migrate to Europe in very dangerous circumstances and on precarious embarkations – which may lead to better circumstances if they survive Libya

and the treacherous sea (see numerous news reports from Aljazeera, BBC, CNN, The Guardian).

Chapter 2, “Looking at The Gambia as a Sexscape: the Formation of a Tourism-Based Sexual Economy,” theorizes The Gambia as a multi-faceted sexscape. It elucidates the impacts tourism development has had on the Gambian landscape through time and space. The chapter uncovers the sexualization of the Senegambian region and its peoples in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It highlights the different socio-sexual scripts that make the Gambian sexscape. The chapter’s principal objectives are to present a brief history of the formation of the Gambian sexscape within which flourishes the tourism-based affective-sexual economy.

Chapter 3, “Jabars, Sugar-babies, Chepehs, FSWs: The Gambian Sexscape, Gambian Women’s Perspectives, and the Tourism-Based Sexual Economy,” I examine what is considered to be the “proper” female sexual behaviors in Gambian, “traditional” and predominantly Muslim and patriarchal contexts. This is done to allow for a better comprehension of Gambian female participation in the sexscape and tourism-based “sex work” despite the striking and unavoidable socio-religious constraints that combine to stigmatize female sex work with Global North male tourists in a way that male sex work with global north female tourists is not. The chapter uncovers specific Gambian and other West African women’s individual strategies, and—as many hope—temporary use of strategic sex to take care of their family and of personal betterment. I incorporate the views of local Gambian and Global North tourist men. Ultimately, the goal of this chapter is to present voices of Gambian women on their lived experiences in tourism-based sexual economy and/or in the larger Gambian sexscape.

In Chapter 4, “Kilifas, Toyboys, Chanters, and MSM: The Gambian Sexscape, Gambian Men’s Perspectives, and Tourism-Based Sexual Economy,” opens with a critical analyses of Gambian masculinity through the deconstruction of the “traditional” notion of “manhood” at work in Gambian society, and the deciphering of key performances of masculinity in “traditional” contexts. The chapter expands on analyses of the multifaceted and complex socio-sexual encounters and interactions Gambian men engage in with Gambian men and/or women, and Global North male and female tourists. I highlight the socio-sexual scripts Gambian men engage in within the Gambian sexscape. I am particularly interested in how heterosexual male sex workers, who often self identify as “self-employed” avoid stigma and ostracism as sex workers, and manage to negotiate for themselves a space of male respectability. Even though same-sex sexuality is criminalized in The Gambia, I end the chapter discussing the role of men who have sex with men (MSM) in the sexscape and their underground interactions. Here as well, I incorporate the perspectives of Global North female tourists. This chapter presents Gambian men’s points of view and their lived experiences in the Gambian sexscape.

Chapter 5, “The Gambian Sexscape and HIV/AIDS: An Ecological Perspective to Sexual Health in the Tourism-Based Sexual Economy,” attempts to assess the impact of the tourism-based affective-sexual economy on the general social health of the country by paying special attention to prevention and rates of infection, the different prevention programs in existence and the specific population they target and serve. Undoubtedly, the preceding chapters have revealed the Gambian tourism industry to constitute an ecological site fostering high-risk sexual behaviors. A discussion of Yahya Jammeh’s claims to be able to cure AIDS, and the very negative impact this had on ongoing

prevention and protection campaigns, and on already infected individuals ends the chapter.

This is an ethnographically rich dissertation. I only hope that the choices I have made to bring this project to fruition actually lead to an accurate representation of young Gambian women's and men's experiences in the Gambian tourism-based affective-sexual economy.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Moving Out in Order to Move Up:**

#### **A Brief Political and Economic History of The Gambia**

This chapter outlines the political and economic history of The Gambia with the objective to contextualize the original research about The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy presented in the subsequent chapters. This chapter emphasizes the importance of agriculture (mostly groundnut production for internal consumption and export) and tourism as the main contributors to the Gambian economy. It highlights key economic and demographic indicators, providing comparison to similar information from other Sub-Saharan African countries, underscoring The Gambia's large youth population and acute poverty. This foregrounds an explanation for the decisions made by many young Gambians for a number of years already to emigrate to the Global North—mostly Western Europe—after a dangerous voyage on overcrowded small embarkations across the Mediterranean sea, and to engage in their country's largely tourism-based sexual economy with the only capital at their disposal: their young bodies. With the latter, they ultimately hope that the “relationship” or “friendship” they develop with tourists will help along their emigration plans.

## The Gambia in Pre-Colonial Times

Map 1.1: The Gambia within the Senegambian Region



(Taken from Image Gallery-senegambia map. Access on July 12, 2017, <http://keywordsuggest.org/gallery/760788.html>)

The history of The Gambia is marked by the geographic, socioeconomic, and political importance of the River Gambia, after which the country is named (see Map 1.1).

Throughout the country's history, the river constituted a route for the transportation of peoples and goods during the period of the trans-Saharan trade at first (commercial activities geared towards the interior of the Sudanic Sahara and linking through various "routes" North Africa to the Sahel region), during the period of the Trans-Atlantic trade

with Europeans (commercial activities linking West Africa to Europe and the Americas), and during the colonial period under British rule (Barry 1976; Gijanto 2007; Wright 2004). The region was of relative importance in West Africa prior to European expansion, for the river facilitated the development of a vibrant space for economic development and exchanges. The river and the people on its shores played a central role in the history of the larger West African sub-region historians have called “the Senegambia” (Curtains 1975; Barry 1998; Gijanto 2000; Wright 2008): mostly the land mass between the Senegal and Gambia Rivers (see Map 1.1). Senegalese historian Boubacar Barry extends the region to parts of what is today Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry (Barry 1998).

The region was occupied by various ethnic groups—the Mandinka, the Fula, the Wolof, the Serer—prior to European expansion. Other groups—the Serahuli, the Bambara, the Manjago and the Aku<sup>2</sup>—moved in as European colonialism settled in. In pre-colonial times, the Senegambia was included as a “vassal region” in a succession of kingdoms or empires that dominated more or less vast areas of West Africa—the Empire of Ghana ruled by the Serahuli (about 7<sup>th</sup> to 12 centuries), the Mali Empire ruled by the Mandinka (about 12<sup>th</sup> to 15 centuries.), and the Songhai Empire ruled by the Soninke (about 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) (see Barry 1998; Curtin 1975; Wright 1977). That

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<sup>2</sup> The Aku are descendants of “Liberated Africans”: former slaves from the Caribbean and the U.S. who repatriated during the period of British’s anti-slavery movement. These “returnees” reached British colonies in West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Bathurst). In what became The Gambia, the majority of these Liberated Africans lived in Bathurst, others lived in Georgetown, MacCarthy Island. They generally adopted a Western style of living in the sense that they practiced Christianity, educated their children in Sierra Leone and Great Britain. They were traders and professionals; many held administrative and government positions in colonial and postcolonial times. The Aku who converted to Islam were called “Aku-Marabout” (Hughes and Perfect 2008).

West African imperial period (from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century) coincided with the expansion of Islam in the region (Gailey 1987; Hughes and Perfect 2006; Gijanto 2000). By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the collapse of the Songhai Empire led the Mandinka people to expand their territory by taking possession of The Gambia River basin down to the mouth of the river, which gave them control of the trade activities in the area. This territorial expansion brought about a movement of populations into the area. The Mandinka took hold of the northern riverbank, and the Wolof, Serer and Fula took hold of the Senegal River valley. These groups were similar in their social and political structures in that they were societies characterized by horizontal or vertical linkages. Wolof society was characterized by horizontal associations, which meant that leadership and control of the community were made between brothers and among noble men, while the Mandinka built vertical linkage societies upon which family heads and or village chiefs took control. These groups operated on a caste system. Roughly speaking, these systems were made up of four major status groups, a noble class (chiefs, monarchs), free men (agriculturalists), castes (griots or bards, blacksmiths, leather-workers), and slaves (the fighting class). Though in most Wolof societies, as Guinean scholar Boubacar Barry has pointed out (Barry 1998), the difference between the free and unfree was less important than the difference between those holding power and those who didn't. In general, these groups functioned as matrilineal or patrilineal societies.

In the area they controlled as a result of their important number—the River Gambia basin—the Mandinka inter-married with other groups, and eventually formed States along the northern and southern shores of the Gambian River Basin. Many of the Mandinka, especially their rulers (called *mansas*), held on to traditional and animist

religious beliefs, even though many converted to Islam towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century during the collapse of the Shonghai Empire. The result of this Islamic revolution led by many charismatic leaders resulted in the subsequent formation of two Islamic majority countries in that region: The Gambia and Senegal.

Following the collapse of the Songhay Empire around the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century-beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Kingdom of Niumi took hold in the western part of the River Gambia, in the area surrounding what ended up being called James Island by the British. The Niumi kingdom became an Atlantic world trade center connected to various commercial markets, networks and trade routes on local, regional and global scales (Barry 1998; Wright 1998; and Gijanto 2005). As Boubacarr Barry (1998) has noted, the Portuguese arrival into the river in 1455 shifted the focus of the progressively Niumi-controlled trade (and of the Senegambia in general) from the West and the interior Saharan trade networks to the East and the Atlantic maritime commerce (Barry 1998). The State of Niumi, which controlled the trade by taxing circulation on the river, eventually succumbed to British colonial forces and their gunboats around the year 1807 (Wright 2004:123). This paved the way for British, Danes and French traders to take hold of the trade on the River Gambia. The British eventually gained a position of power in the area as they took over the fort Danes had built on James Island in the middle of the river in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which allowed them to impose the terms of the trade on the river. French colonizers progressively acknowledged British preeminence over the River Gambia and took control of the Senegal and Casamance Rivers and surrounding areas, which explains both the shape Senegal's territory ended up taking as a French colony (with a Wolof ethnic majority), all around The Gambia, a British colony (with a

Mandinka ethnic majority) until 1965. British incursion into the region and the subsequent collapse of the Kingdom of Niumi, correspond with the British relocating commercial activities from Niumi to St. Mary's Island (later named Bathurst) located on the south bank of the river in 1816 (Curtin 1981:95; Mahoney 1982:43; Wright 2004:123).

The Gambia's pre-colonial history reveals an engagement of the people of the region in various kinds of socio-economic activities that allowed them to take advantage of their specific location in the regional landscape to control parts of the trade between the Sahel and North Africa, and later between the Sahel and maritime trans-Atlantic voyage to Europe and the Americas. Though most of these societies were engaged in different commercial activities involving the commerce of salt, hides, gold, wax, kola nuts, cotton, and dried fish, the trade in slaves would end up being their most lucrative export: it provided the African rulers who engaged in it access to horses, guns, and luxury goods (Barry 1998; Curtin 1975; Wright 2004). In general, the communities that lived on the banks of these two Rivers—the Senegal and The Gambia—were in charge of their own affairs: families took care of their own food supplies and of that of their rulers. In turn, the rulers protected the communities who served them, while at the same time controlling the trade, which gave them access to the necessary wealth to buy such items as horses, guns, alcohol, cloths, etc.

This system changed once the European incursion occurred: the communities that had been operating as independent entities were forced to operate under—or at least having to answer to—a centralized source of power under the French or the British.

## **Colonialism in The Gambia: The End of the Slave Trade and the Introduction of Groundnut-Export Agriculture**

The 15<sup>th</sup> century brought about the first period of European settlement (mostly on the coastal areas) and expansion into the Senegambian rivers. The Portuguese were the first to sponsor an expedition to the River Gambia in 1455. They settled on James Island around the mid-15 century where they build the first fort from which they participated in the Senegambia's trans-Atlantic trade in slaves while also looking for gold. They were followed by the French, the English, the Spanish, and the Dutch. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the British and the French would be the two major European powers in the Senegambia (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Barry 1998; and Gijanto 2009). The two colonial powers had different reasons to engage in a colonial expansion in the Senegambia. The French's interest laid in the fact that they were attempting to develop a presence in the region while also participating in the trade in slaves and various products, such as—quite importantly—the groundnuts (peanuts). The British's motivation was to hold a base in the region from where to wage their anti-slavery campaign while also introducing a more “legitimate” trade and attempting to countering French control in the Senegambia (Wright 2013). For many years, British and French fought each other to take control of the region. However, as a consequence of the 1783 Treaty of Versailles, which mostly had to do with the British's North American colonies, the French were forced to share the region with the British (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Wright 2013). They kept the islands of St. Louis (at the mouth of the Senegal River) and Gorée (near Dakar) in contemporary Senegal while the British kept James Island and the island of Bathurst (the first name given to The Gambia as a colony: see below)—now known as Banjul (see Map 1.1). The

end result was that the British established their headquarters on James Island while the French were allowed to hold a commercial post at Albreda on the north bank of the river in front of James Island. At the time, there was a kind of gentlemen agreement in that both French and British were present on the River Gambia. To protect their presence on James Island and their activities in the area, the British established a fortified garrison on the island. However, as they did not put much effort into maintaining the post, and following the ups and downs of the trade they controlled, the British abandoned James Island multiple times between 1750 and 1788 (Gijanto 2013). The Company of Merchants that dealt with trade in Africa at some point even took possession of James Island under the direction of Earl Bathurst, who was Secretary of State for War and the Colonies from 1812 to 1827 (Hughes and Perfect 2006:13; Gijanto 2009 and 2013). He had for a mission to curb the slave trade and incite people to venture into new trade instead. The lack of investment and limited control over fort James on James Island led to further abandonment of the island. In 1816, the British Captain Alexander Grant, who had led a successful expedition to take Gorée Island from the French was sent by the British Governor of Sierra Leone, Sir Charles MacCarthy, to rebuild a new fort on James Island, which proved to be impractical (Hughes and Perfect 2006). Governor MacCarthy deviated from those plans and decided instead to take possession of the Island of St. Mary—at the mouth of the River Gambia—Captain Grant purchased St. Mary's Island from the King of Kombo by giving him 103 bars of iron to establish a new settlement called Bathurst (Hughes and Perfect 2006:42).

By 1889, the British colonial presence was limited to the island they called Bathurst at the mouth of the River Gambia. They only had episodically penetrated the

river up to James Island and had no permanent presence anywhere else in what is today the Republic of The Gambia. While Bathurst was indeed a colony, the rest of the country was engulfed in wars between the religious traditionalists Mandinka and Soninke on one side, against Islamic Marabout invaders from upriver. Since the British had a strategic policy to not get entangled in the conflicts of the warring factions, fearing defeat many of the Soninke chiefs/rulers looked for protection from the British and willingly offered them some of their territories against military protection. The British refused to grant them protection and instead opted to mediate between the warring groups (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Wright 2004). The British's hands-off approach incited France to adopt a policy to confront heads-on the Islamic Marabouts. France's intervention forced the British to get more engaged for they didn't want to lose the chance to gain more territory or to run the risk of seeing France gain more influence in the region. The consequence of these wars between traditional African religions' practitioners and Islamic Marabouts was that many in the region ended up converting to Islam, which explains why it is still today the dominant religion in both Senegal and The Gambia.

The British colony of Bathurst was under several jurisdictions (the colony of Sierra Leone, the colony of Lagos, and the colony of The Gold Coast [contemporary Ghana] respectively) before the British made it an independent colony under the authority of its own governor. The colony of Bathurst was established for two general goals: 1) to curtail French influence and territorial possessions in the region, and 2) to suppress the slave trade. While it may be true that the initial plans of the British to take possession of Banjul/Bathurst was to curb the slave trade, Donald Wright has argued that the anti-slavery campaign was abandoned once the opportunity of the groundnut trade arose

(Wright 2013). Some repatriated slaves to neighboring Sierra Leone and Liberia were brought in Bathurst and were used by the British to serve as clerics for the colonial administrators. They made up the Liberated African group in Bathurst and would later be called the Aku Marabouts, Krios, or Creoles and enjoyed a slightly better status than local Gambians (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Hughes and Gailey 1999).

Since Bathurst was a colony that the British were not too enthusiastic to keep because it offered little natural resources and harsh environmental conditions, they considered giving it up to France in exchange for other territories. A deal they had arranged fell through and France and the United Kingdom ended up signing the Anglo-French Convention in 1889 that demarcated their respective colonial borders in the Senegambian region (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Mahoney 1982):

Despite their best efforts to get rid of the Gambia, it thus remained in British hands as the “scramble for Africa” reached its climax in West Africa in the late 1880s. By the end of 1888, the French had established a presence in a number of places along the banks of the River Gambia, while the Gambian government was beginning to sign treaties with local rulers largely as a defensive measure against French expansion. At the Anglo-French Convention of 1889, which fixed the border between the two colonies, the British made no demands for territory in the Senegambia interior; all they sought was control over the River Gambia. This was achieved when the French eventually agreed that a narrow strip of land ten kilometres either side of the River as far as Yarbutenda, about 470 kilometres from the mouth of the River, should be British. The boundaries were fixed on the

ground in the 1890s and have remained largely unchanged ever since except for a slight modification in the 1970s. (Perfect and Evans65)

This agreement ultimately explains why Senegal's and The Gambia's territories have the shape they have. Although the British took control of the river and the land on both shores, Bathurst was the actual colony while the Kombo and the rest of the upriver areas were a Protectorate (mostly functioning as an autonomous entity with some reliance of protection from Britain), with some villages only joining the Protectorate in the late 1970s (Hughes and Perfect 2006:43).

As halting the slave trade concerned the British, they encouraged indigenous farmers who mostly farmed grains (millet, rice) for local consumption to engage in a new agricultural endeavor: the harvesting of groundnuts (see Picture 1.1 and 1.2) (Carney and Watts 2016:656).



Picture 1.1 above: Groundnut Farmers and Seasonal migrant workers (“strange farmers”) in The Gambia in 1906. (Taken from The Gambia Historical Photography Facebook page. Accessed on July 11, 2017).



Picture 1.2: Groundnut Cutters, Upriver, The Gambia, in 1917-1922. (Taken from The Gambia Historical Photography Facebook page. Accessed on July 11, 2017).

Groundnuts were useful to Europeans for it allowed them to make soap and food items for consumptions. Both British and French merchants offered credit to local farmers in Senegal and The Gambia for growing groundnuts. These merchants bought the crops when harvested for export in exchange for more credit and imported goods (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Klein 1972; Carney and Watts 2016; Wright 2006). This turned many local farmers into sharecroppers, for they paid high interest for their credits/loans from the colonial merchants who made more benefit from groundnut

production than local farmers did. The farmers made barely enough to pay their creditors and colonial administrative taxes, while at the same time—with the little resources they had—buy imported goods (rice and food stuff) from these merchants in order to feed themselves and their families. This put many local male groundnut farmers in debt with their loan-providing shark merchants (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Klein 1972; Carney and Watts 2016; Wright 2006). While this arrangement was beneficial to colonial merchants, it was disastrous to local farmers, and their communities' way of life. The commodification and production of groundnuts also had a direct effect on gender roles, women's autonomy and land rights, and sexual division of labor, especially among the Mandinka (see Carney and Watts 1991; Schroeder 1999). Women, especially from Mandinka and Jola ethnic groups (this is an ethnic group mostly concentrated in the Senegalese region of Casamance and the Foni region of The Gambia, which shares a border with Casamance), who historically farmed rice for sustenance, saw their crops overtaken by the merchants-importers of rice following the high demand for consumption by the new groundnut workers known as “strange farmers” (who came from Senegal [mostly Casamance] and other neighboring countries such as Guinea, Mali and Guinea Bissau (see Sallah 2009; Swindell 1978; Wright 2007), which put a heavy burden on the backs of women to feed their household and communities. Traditionally, that is to say prior to the introduction of groundnut as a major crop, households were systems in which everyone had a role to play in helping to sustain the family. Groundnut agriculture and trade moved many Gambian men to neglect their domestic duties and to focus primarily on growing groundnuts. And while traditional practices had women transfer cultivated lands to their daughters, colonial administrator enforced policies that took land away

from women and gave it to men so that they could have more land to cultivate groundnuts for export (Carney and Watts 1991:664).

The colonial government appointed chiefs following a tradition of indirect-rule (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Wright 2006). These chiefs would largely be left alone so long as they did not interfere with the groundnut trade. These chiefs were treated as “errand boys” who lacked knowledge and needed to be lectured by their colonial masters. If they and their farmers didn’t produce as planned, they were deemed to be inherently lazy for lacking the work ethics of their colonial masters. The colonial authorities only cared to deal with them for the collection of revenues in the form of tariffs from the groundnut crops (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Klein 1972; Carney and Watts 2016; Wright 2006). Groundnut was the main cash crop for colonial and post-colonial Gambia, whereas farmers, mostly males, sold their crops to British traders. The Gambia’s colonial budget was solely based on these chiefs’ and their respective farmers’ economic viability since—unlike its neighbors Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ghana—it had little to no natural resources to offer. This meant that the colonial administration was exclusively funded by groundnut production and trade, hence their pressure on Gambian farmers to produce more and more groundnuts. This situation made groundnut farmers and their families vulnerable to world market prices: if prices were high, it gave groundnut farmers the chance to pay their debts, colonial taxes, and have a little surplus to buy the imported goods necessary for their survival. However, if prices fell and imported goods’ cost rose, they would be left with little or no food to eat. Life under the colonial rule was horrendously Gambian-poverty-producing (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Klein 1972; Carney and Watts 2016; Wright 2006).

The British colonial administration system consisted in having the colonial subjects cover the cost of their own administration. Consequently, development for The Gambia was never really a preoccupation of British colonials who were much more interested in generating the revenues necessary for the colonial administration to function and for keeping reserves for the rainy days instead of strategically investing in the colony. Despite the fact that The Gambia produced far more revenues than expenses, the British colonial system did nothing to develop social services or build infrastructures (Wright 1995:4): per year, the British only allocated 3,500 pounds for education and 24,712 pounds for medical services in the 1940's colonial administrative budget, which represented less than one percent of the population getting education and health care. A British medical officer labeled the Hospital Royal Victoria—The Gambia's only hospital—: “indubitably the worst in the whole of the Colonial Empire” (quoted in Wright 1995:4). Colonial education in the colony was extremely poor. In their effort to spend little resources on education, Colonial administrators relied heavily on Christian missionaries (Methodists, Roman Catholics, Anglicans) and Muslims schools to provide education mostly for boys. Girls were often left out of the educational system altogether, due to the patriarchal practices that didn't favor educating women. The Christian and Muslim schools were opened in Bathurst and mostly served the children of the small Gambian elites. Outside of colonial Bathurst, a school was opened in Georgetown on MacCarthy Island by governor, Sir C.H. Armitage in 1923. The sole purpose of that school was to educate the sons of Protectorate chiefs. The mediocre colonial educational system left many generations of women illiterate. My grandmother and countless of her peers were among them. Some Gambian men, on the contrary, took advantage of their

(mediocre) education to determine their futures and eventually obtain scholarships to study in the Global North since they could read and write in English. The legacy of that system created an educational gap between men and women that can be seen throughout the colonial and postcolonial history of The Gambia up to the present time.

The Health system wasn't any better either. There was only one hospital, the Royal Victoria, in the colony (including the Protectorate) during the colonial period. It was created to treat the troops stationed in The Gambia during the World Wars, colonial administrators, and European expats and provide them with the most basic medical care. In the latter years of colonialism, the hospital began treating local Gambians. In the Protectorate, a few outpost care tents were erected to treat minor wounds and infections by colonial administrators' merciful wives and/or health-focused "sisters" (nurses trained by missionaries, who came out of the Creole class, descendants of the "Liberated Africans"). In 1943, the lack of medical treatment and proper nourishment was associated with a life expectancy rate for Gambians of 26 years, and an alarmingly high infant mortality rate.

A journalist called Morley Richards, in an effort to criticize the Gambian colonial administration, wrote a piece about the Gambian plight in the then *Daily Express* right before World War II:

I question whether they have escaped from their slavery; they are taxed, directly and indirectly, out of all proportion to their miserable cost of living... They pay heavy duties on staple foods-rice and sugar... They even pay an export duty of 10 shillings a ton on the groundnuts they send out of the country, almost their only earning sources. They are in bondage, these black Britons-in debt from the cradle

to the grave... in order to pay salaries to white Britons who administer where little administration is required but do not develop when development is most urgently needed.” (quoted in Wright 1995:5)

In so many ways, the colonial order is still intact as The Gambia’s main cash crop is still groundnuts, even though there is now a new industry, which comes with similar unjust exploitation, the tourism industry which accounts for 20% of the Gambian GDP (CIA Factbook 2018). As I argue in this dissertation, tourism stands to reproduce racial, class, gender, and national/international hierarchies already visible during the colonial period.

The colony’s living conditions—especially in Bathurst—were so terrible that they caught the attention of the then American President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1943, on his way to meet Winston Churchill in Casablanca, Roosevelt made a brief stop in Britain’s smallest African colony: The Gambia. This brief stopover allowed Roosevelt to witness first-hand the miserable conditions of The Gambia and its unhappy natives. The experience offended Roosevelt’s anti-colonial sensibility to the point that he was eager to raise the issue with Churchill who had been lecturing him about the benefits of British colonization in Africa. When writing to his son about what he was going to say to Churchill, Roosevelt indicated that he could not wait to evoke the miserable conditions and human suffering he witnessed in The Gambia, “That Hell-hole of Yours called Bathurst” (Wright 1995:3). Many observers agreed with FDR in that they saw The Gambia as a depressing place full of poor, sick and unhappy subjects, a place that could only bring shame to a colonial empire (Wright 1995).

The colonial political situation wasn't any different: it was controlled by British colonials and merchants, who yielded policies that to no surprise only benefited their own interests and ignored the natives'. No Gambian served in the Legislative Council until the later part of the colonial period, in 1906, when Samuel J. Forster, Jr. (an Aku) was appointed as permanent member of the Legislative Council (Hughes and Perfect 2006:60). Membership in the Legislative Council was reserved for British colonial administrators and local British merchants, who yielded a lot of power and whose interests were constantly preserved by the colonial state. A series of ordinances were passed in order to strengthen local British merchants' positions at the expense of both "liberated African entrepreneurs" and French business houses. Taxation was shifted away from the British merchants towards the liberated African traders and French merchants. Taxes were heavily applied to the importation of kola nuts and spirit license requirements for liberated African traders, who were involved in commerce from Freetown to Bathurst. As for the French, they had to pay an export duty on groundnuts along with a tariff on their sugar imports. These actions also impacted the poor groundnuts farmers from the Protectorate who had a difficult time to sell their groundnuts at a respectable price, which often prevented them to make enough money to buy sugar and other commodities from the liberated African traders and the French merchants. Ultimately, these actions further increased the economic unviability of the colony.

Since the British government saw The Gambia more as a liability than a cash cow, they were eager to move it towards independence, which gave way to a series of constitutional referendums between 1958 and 1960 (Hughes and Perfect 2006), which in turn led to the colonial administration policy to progressively have local Gambians more

involved in their government. A positive result was a referendum passed the Constitution of 1960, which allowed for local election. Local Gambians became eligible to occupy seats in the House of Representatives in representation of both the colony and the Protectorate. These constitutional referenda gave Western-educated Gambian men the opportunity to form a new male-exclusive political class in the colony and to participate in local government. In 1962, an election was held and brought The Gambia's first Prime Minister, Dr. David Jawara, a veterinarian Mandinka from the Niani village of Barajali. Jawara, who was raised as a Muslim, converted to Christianity to marry an Aku woman from a prominent family, Augusta Mahoney: she was a nursing sister, and the only woman to hold a seat in Jawara's new government. His party, the People's Progressive Party or PPP, carried a majority of seats in the House of Representatives by appealing to the Mandinka majority who had been neglected in the rural Protectorate (Hughes and Perfect 2009; Hughes and Gamble 2009).

The Gambia obtained its independence on February 18, 1965 by entering into the British Commonwealth. It became a republic after a national vote in 1970. After receiving a Knighthood from the British Crown and following the end of his marriage to Augusta Mahoney, David Jawara converted back to Islam as Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara. He became The Gambia's first President. Independence returned Bathurst back to its pre-colonial name, Banjul, which has been serving as the country's capital since then.

Colonial rule in The Gambia was marked by British exploitation. The colonial period has had a consequential and lasting effect on the country socio-political and economic realities. The introduction of groundnut agriculture transformed what were once independent peoples into very vulnerable mono-croppers dependent on the global

market and its unpredictable fluctuations. The colonial period altered gender relations and agricultural practices, while also introducing abject poverty.

### **Postcolonial Gambia**

As was the case in other newly formed postcolonial nations, when the new Gambian government took control in 1965, the model of governance they adopted was the one left by their former colonial masters. The objectives of the colonially educated Gambian elites were not to totally dismantle colonial structures but to pick up from where the colonial system had left, which meant that for the most part they carried out national policies beneficial to them and their inner circle. Government officials moved to occupy former colonialists' positions and adopted a lifestyle that set them apart from the average poverty-stricken Gambians. Lebanese and expat business owners continued using their economic leverage to yield demands to the government to protect their business interests, pay little taxes and continue providing meager salaries to Gambian workers. As the resource-limited Gambian state was not able to offer generous salaries to high ranking officials/civil servants, these officials found other ways to secure an income: they extorted money from poor regular Gambians. In the end, Gambia's second wave of governance used state sponsored violence and terror to rule its subjects by using tactics and language reminiscent of colonial officials' practices.

For the sake of this dissertation, postcolonial Gambia is examined and characterized as the succession of two regimes: the first and second republics. The first republic covers the presidency of Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, from Independence to 1994. The second republic emerged with the authoritarian rule of Yahya Jammeh, a young

officer who toppled Jawara in a military coup in 1994. That coup interrupted democratic governance and the respect of human rights.

### The First Republic

After 68 years of British colonial rule, Sir Dawda Jawara took The Gambia's leadership amid concerns over the viability of the country due to its poor economic affairs as the possibility of being taken over by its larger neighbor Senegal was strongly suggested as a way to provide sustainable governance (Saine and Ceesay 2012). These concerns guided the leaders of the new nation: they attempted to change the course of the country's political and economic possibilities. Jawara gained prominence in 1959, when elected as the leader of his political party, the Protectorate People's Party, which was later changed to the Progressive People's Party (PPP). As a rural man, he was able to mobilize rural, mostly Mandinka voters to bring his party to victory in the 1962 election. This gave him the opportunity to serve as the first Prime Minister, and to later lead the country to Independence in 1964. He and his party went on to win six consecutive elections in what critics called fairly fair elections for 31 years until his toppling in 1994. Jawara and the PPP dominated Gambia's political life for three decades. His major contributions certainly were his commitment to democracy and human rights. His major failure was his incapacity to improve the country's economic prospect.

As the leader of a multi-ethnic and pluri-religious country, Jawara consciously made efforts to accommodate all ethnic and religious groups in his cabinet. He promoted religious tolerance as the only way to secure the country's majority Muslims and minority Christians to live in a harmonious environment, away from the tensions and conflicts that characterized other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Under Jawara, The

Gambia had a multi-party system where opposition parties were allowed to contest and operate without fear of reprisal. Elections were held on a regular basis. The PPP enjoyed advantages in that it won most elections, with opposition parties securing a minority of seats in the House of Representatives. There was open-mindedness for political opponents, a largely free press, and active trade unions. The Judiciary was run independently, and occasionally judges rendered decisions that were unfavorable or embarrassing to the government (Hughes and Perfect 2006). As a pragmatist, Jawara had an administration that steered away from political ideologies and military force. This is how, in the aftermath of the 1981 unsuccessful coup, the suspected rebels were arrested and given fair legal proceedings. When the court rendered death sentences to the perpetrators, Jawara commuted all of the death sentences levied by the courts with the exception of the sentence for Mustapha Danso, who was accused of killing General Mahoney without remorse (Hughes and Perfect 2006; executedtoday.com 2013). In the early 1990s, Jawara moved to abolish the death penalty in The Gambia. Internationally, Jawara persuaded the then Organization of African Unity (OAU, now called the African Union or AU) to adopt the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (also called the Banjul Charter), a legal instrument that guarantees human rights protections to citizens of OAU member countries and works to hold member nations accountable for their human rights violations. In recognition for his advocacy in the OAU on human rights, the office that monitors such cases is housed in The Gambia. These accomplishments have made of Jawara "a founding hero of The Gambia" (Hughes and Perfect 2006). He was seen as a mild mannered and humble man who fought for a nation that was deemed to have an improbable future. Jawara is affectionately known as *fafa*

("father" in Mandinka) of The Gambia, for he was seen by many as a principled and caring leader, who saw that The Gambia and her people lived in a free society, democratic, and run by the rule of law, away from state-sponsored oppression.

While Jawara was successful at fighting for human rights and for policies that united Gambians socially and politically in a free market economy, he was not so successful at dealing with corruption within his government and at improving the economic conditions of the country.

The 1970s were a good period for the Gambian economy, which had then a large foreign exchange reserve, a recurrent budget surplus, and a low debt rate (Hughes and Perfect 2006:37). This resulted in an increase in wages and a rise of the income level coupled with low inflation. Under Jawara, literacy rates improved modestly and the difference between males and females and rural and urban decreased: schools were opening up, and a teachers' college was built to educate future teachers, which benefited a lot to women. Life expectancy at birth increased for there were moderate medical facilities constructed, especially in rural areas. However, these modest gains were lost due to government mismanagement in the public sector, dependence on foreign grants and loans, and a world economic crisis (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Saine 2012; Sallah 2012; Nyang 2012).

These factors led to the deterioration of the economy by the mid 1970s onwards, which created an atmosphere of cronyism, and a general feeling of discontent with the government. The lifestyle of government officials was starkly different from the lifestyle of the population in general. The sentiment was that there was too much corruption by government officials, who were taking resources away and not working to improve the

lives of Gambian citizens. Although Jawara himself was not corrupt, he turned a blind eye to corruption by his ministers and civil servants (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Saine 2012). Most of the corruption consisted in the mishandling and/or misappropriation of foreign grants and loans that The Gambia heavily depended upon for economic survival. The country went from being a poster-child for the IMF as one of its best success stories for implementing all seven structural adjustments the IMF demanded as opposed to what Malawi, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda did at the time (Hughes and Perfect 2006:368) to being heavily indebted and gradually falling into arrears in its debt obligations to the IMF and other international creditors. Inflation increased sharply and in general imported goods became prohibitively expensive for most Gambians (Saine 2006; Sallah 2004; Wright 2004 ; Nyang 2006). By the beginning of the 1990s tension began to rise among the people, and especially in the military. Economic stagnation, general poverty and corruptions amongst PPP's officials and civil servants created a fruitful ground for a military coup (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Saine 2006 and 2009).

In *The Paradox of Third-Wave Democratization in Africa: The Gambia Under AFPRC-APRC Rule, 1994-2008* (2009), Abdoulaye Saine identified the major factors that contributed to the toppling of Jawara: his government's inability to curbe out economic and social underdevelopment, public corruption, the class divide between those holding governmental offices and the rest of the population, the parties inability to appeal to the growing youth, and lastly the hunger for power of young opportunist military officers (Saine 2009). With the 1994 coup, The Gambia fell under an authoritarian regime lead by a brutal military man-turned civilian leader named Yahya Jammeh, born to a Jola Muslim family in Kanilai, a Foni Kansala District of the Lower River Division. His regime led

the country further into a social and economic downturn with a complete disregard for the rule of law or for human rights.

The coup Yahya Jammeh staged pushed Jawara and his family along with some of his ministers to take refuge in a U.S. landing ship, *La Moure County*, in dock in the port of Banjul at the time. The ship took them to Senegal, where they were given asylum. Jawara and his family subsequently made it to the United Kingdom, where he resided as a deposed leader until 2002. While Jawara appealed for assistance to end the coup from Senegal, the U.S., and other Western powers, no one came to his rescue and coup makers took over the country. Senegal, lead at the time by President Amadou Diouf, convinced that Jammeh and his band of soldiers posed no threat to Senegalese security, held off plans for intervention (Hughes and Perfect 2006:288). Senegal ended up being the first country to recognize Jammeh's new government. The coup brought an abrupt end to what was at the time the most enduring multiparty democracy in Africa, and the longest serving African leader (Hughes and Perfect 2006; Saine 2009). The immediate aftermath of the coup was the arrest of PPP ministers, the dismantling of opposition parties, the end of political activities, and the suspension of the 1970 Constitution. Yahya Jammeh established and headed the Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council (AFPRC). While many in Gambian society at the time of the coup welcomed the change with some level of apprehension, they were soon disappointed by the actions of Jammeh and his AFPRC (Saine 2009; Hughes and Perfect, 2006; Ceesay 2012).

Coming into power, Jammeh managed to kill or disappear his opponents, inflict terror on Gambians, while at the same time using the state to take control of national resources for his and his closest business-partners' benefits. Undoubtedly, the coup had a

great many negative impacts on the country's socio-economic and political landscape, especially the tourism industry. Facing pressure from the Commonwealth, the IMF, and the World Bank, travel advisories or bans from the UK and Norway weakened international tourist arrivals, and in that way dramatically decreased the country's main source of foreign exchange and the suspension of Western aid. Under international pressure, Jammeh and his party decided to hold election in 1996 to return the country to civilian rule. Jammeh's preoccupation was to appear less "offensive" as civilian leader. His ruling council changed its name from the "Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council" (AFPRC) to the "Alliance for Patriotic and Re-Oriented Construction" (APRC) government/party, which appeased donors whose funding and loans were desperately needed. After that, Jammeh continued to hold flawed elections in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 respectively. However, 2016's election ended Jammeh's authoritarian regime. These elections were all tarnished by violence and intimidations that consistently ensured Jammeh's victory and a majority of seats for his party in the legislature, in essence giving him absolute power to reign over Gambian politics, economy, and society. He used the legislative body to pass constitutional reforms that further consolidated his power (Saine 2009; Hughes and Perfect 2006; Ceesay 2012). Jammeh and the APRC created the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) with legal instruments such as Decree 45, which had enormous power to search and arrest citizens in the name of national security. They brought back the death penalty, passed Decree 70 and 71 (a legal instrument that required individuals to pay D100,000 (about US\$10,000 at the time) to establish a newspaper, which legally excised the freedom of speech and the free press. The NIA

went after journalists, who were systematically harassed, tortured, detained, deported, disappeared, or killed (Saine and Ceesay 2012:157).

On April 10 and 11, 2000 during a peaceful student demonstration, Jammeh's security forces opened fire killing fourteen demonstrators and injuring several more: this was a first in the history of The Gambia. Jammeh's NIA agents dressed in civilian clothes harassed citizens suspected of opposing the government. NIA agents often patrolled the beaches rounding up "beach boys," also known as "bumsters," who they would beat, shave and send to work camps (practically Jammeh's private farm in Kanilai) so that "they could be taught the value of hard work." I discuss this particular practice of repressive power in the tourism industry in chapter four. In essence, Jammeh and his APRC ran a police state marred with fear, repression, and brutality, conditions that Gambians had never experienced before. As Gambians are prone to say: The Gambia has always been a peaceful society, in which the people are preoccupied to conserve peace (*jama* in wolof). In fact, our daily greetings when meeting someone consist of wishing peace for the person met and his or her relatives: this is a religious-cultural value that Gambians hold very dear as part of their identity. Jammeh's presidency inflicted state-sanctioned violence and intimidation on the entire population.

Besides living under fear of violence, many Gambians also lived under horrible economic conditions. During Jammeh's presidency, the economy suffered from high inflation, high unemployment and underemployment, and exuberant external debts. Jammeh at times, in response to his critics, would discuss the fact that he and his party have built schools, hospitals, and roads; they have refurbished the national airport, established the University of the Gambia (UTG), and the only Gambian television station,

the GRTS or Gambian Radio and Television Station. These achievements, however, must be seen as nothing more than superficial deeds as the majority of these schools were understaffed and underfunded, teachers were not paid on time, and schools supplies remained scarce. The UTG is run quite poorly and with a very limited budget. Faculty members complain about the lack of available classrooms to teach, the absence of class materials, and the nonexistence of labs to perform science experiments, among other things. Jammeh hired and fired vice chancellors of the University system, for he was the chancellor, on a whim. Hospitals lacked qualified doctors and nurses and medical supplies. The Gambians who can afford it seek medical treatments in neighboring Senegal or abroad. In fact, most Gambians refer to the Royal Victoria hospital as *harryallah*, which means in Wolof, “the place where you go and wait for God’s action.” In fact, one of the benefits that Jammeh got out of his relationship with Fidel Castro was having Cuban doctors to come to The Gambia on medical missions to treat patients and train Gambian doctors and nurses. Many Gambians expressed reservations about the qualifications of these doctors. The sentiments were that the Cuban doctors were students sent there to get some experience and refine their skills. The GRTS had a poor and limited programming that was only focused on Jammeh himself. In essence, the station ran as Jammeh’s propaganda machine, airing Jammeh’s speeches daily and continuously, including his many visits to Kanilai (his home village in the Foni region) on his farm and the ceremonies he attended. The actual news reporting was mainly focused on how well and how much “his excellency” was doing for his country. There was no independent news, just news on Jammeh as a “exceptional leader”. On televised programs, Jammeh would be given several names: he insisted in being called “His Excellency, President,

Professor, Dr., Babili Mansa, Al-Haji Yahya Jammeh,” which means “His Excellency, President, Professor, Dr., Chief, One Who has Done a Pilgrimage to Mecca, Yahya Jammeh.” Jammeh also had posted large poster pictures of himself throughout the country, as a reminder as to who was in charge, just in case Gambians forgot. He would make headlines nationally and internationally as a ruler of a tiny nation who threatened to behead gay people, who carried out deadly witch hunt on poor rural women, and who claimed that he could cure AIDS and Asthma with herbs and prayers. As discussed in chapter five, his claim to cure AIDS had a severe and negative impact on the lives of people living with the illness and on prevention programs in the country. Jammeh even constructed an arch in 1996 in the capital, Banjul, which he called “Arch 22,” under which only him and his motorcade could pass (see Picture 1.3 below). The reservation of the arch for his exclusive use caused terrible traffic as drivers had to make a detour to enter the capital. The arch is symbolic: it represented Jammeh’s excesses and wasteful spending.



Picture 1.3: The Arch 22 Monument, Banjul, The Gambia. (From Wikipedia, accessed on July 10, 2017)

An examination of government expenditures during Jammeh's rule reveal the privileged use of national resources for military spending, rather than on schools and hospitals. According to Saine (2012), in 2012 72% of Gambians lived in abject poverty (Saine 2012:157). While Gambians have gotten poorer, Jammeh and his party loyalists have gotten richer. Corruption has gone awry to the point that the IMF and the World Bank have put pressure on the government to curb corruption. When Jammeh took control of the country, it was reported that he only had 700 dalasies to his name (the Gambian currency) (roughly equal to US\$15.00) in his bank account. As head of state, he was guaranteed a salary of \$20,000.00 a year. Today, he is considered to be one of the richest men in Africa, owning luxury houses in the U.S.A., luxurious cars, and a private plane. Jammeh is also known to spend a lot on entertaining young women in top tier hotels in The Gambia and in the United States. He and his cronies have managed to amass wealth estimated at US\$ 1 billion (Saine 2012). As Jammeh once said on GRTS, "his great-great grandchildren will never know what poverty is" because he is that rich. In his home village of Kanilai, he built a resort and a farm, where he also has a "safari lodge" with imported lions, elephants, ostriches, and hyenas, since The Gambia doesn't have big game animals. Though it was rumored that in Kanilai, there is a constant supply of electricity 24 hours a day, the rest of the country endures light shortages every day and high electricity bills. When I visited Kanilai in 2010 there were lights everywhere, and the public wifi worked very well and was fast in comparison with the wifi in other areas in the country. As I am writing this dissertation, a stunning revelation came in the press from the new post-Jammeh government (Barry 2016), according to which Kanilai residents haven't paid for electricity for years. Recently, when Wikileaks revealed the

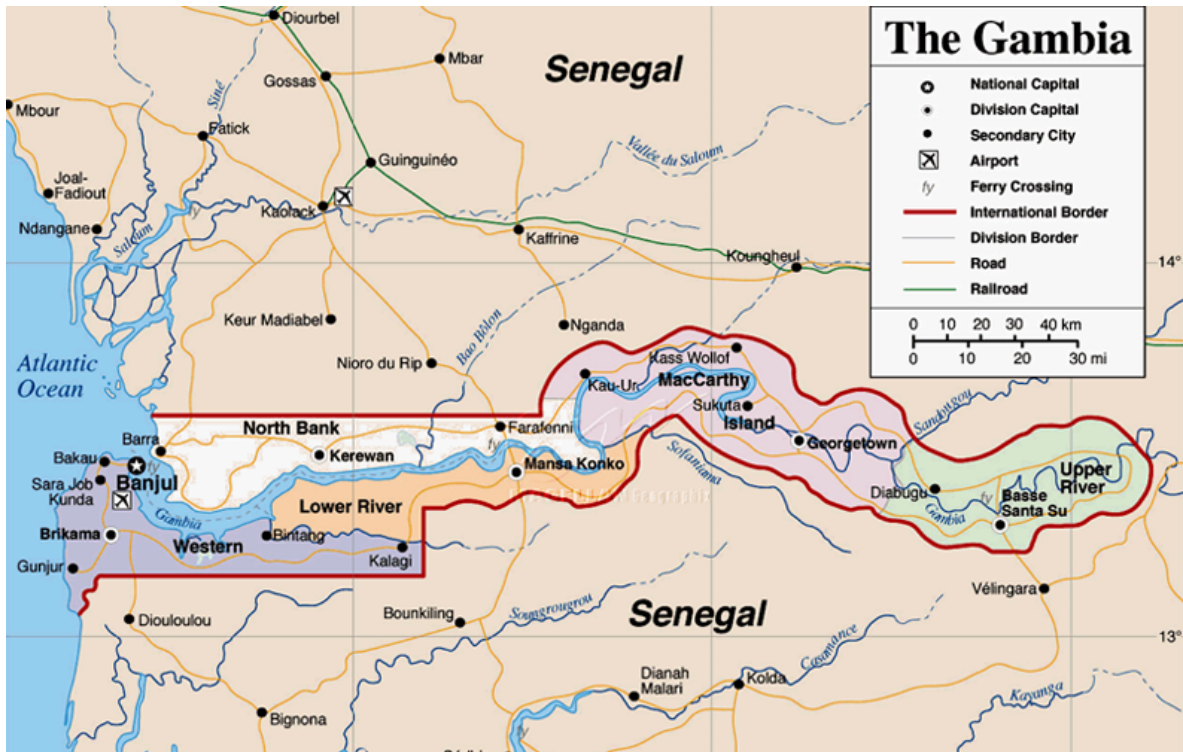
Panama Papers, Jammeh and his business partner Amadou Samba were listed as clients with funds in the amount of US\$900,000,000. These events and many others incidents have left many Gambians disillusioned with Jammeh's government.

In the 2016 election, Jammeh was arrogantly convinced that he would win, once again. He allowed for the counting of vote results in each independent polling station, which prevented any tampering with the results. The on-the-spot counting revealed that this time, a majority of the Gambian people had courageously voted against Jammeh and the APRC to instead choose the Coalition party lead by Adama Barrow. The results stunted the despot leader, who once vowed that he intended to rule the country for a billion years on GRTS: "Allah elected me and only Allah can remove me" (GRTS, November 2016). The political end of Jammeh and his APRC had come. At first, Jammeh accepted the election results. A few days later, he rescinded his concession, which created a political impasse that resulted in several negotiation sessions with ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), which sent in a delegation of West African heads of states (Barry 2016; Barry and Searcey 2016). These delegations were unsuccessful, and ECOWAS decided unanimously to send in ECOMOG forces (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) to forcefully remove him from the presidency if need be. As the ECOMOG forces led by Senegal waited at the border for a last minute attempt negotiation under way to prevent bloodshed, Jammeh decided to leave the country, which he was unfortunately allowed to do, and live in exile in Equatorial Guinea with some of his wealth and luxury cars. He chose that country because it is not a signatory of the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Barry and Searcey 2017).

During Jammeh’s presidency, Gambians have been living in abject poverty. The dire economic conditions have forced many Gambians to find alternative means to survive. The need for economic survival has pushed many to participate in different informal work such as selling on the streets and on the beaches, day laboring on construction sites, cooking, car washings, running errands, and or selling/exchanging sex for goods or money. As indicated in the introduction, this dissertation is focused on how some Gambians use their young bodies—the only “capital” they own—to engage in informal sex work with tourists. The “friendship” they develop with the mostly European tourists vacationing in the country is often conceived as hopefully providing an opportunity to migrate legally to Europe. The Gambia having one of the highest unemployment rates, especially among youths, in the region, many young Gambians risk their lives by making the dangerous journey, called the “Backway,” across the Sahara desert to the Mediterranean in hopes of migrating to Europe where they are convinced they will have a better life, with opportunities to do something good with their lives and hopefully be able to send money back home to parents, siblings, and/or children. In the process, many lose their lives in the desert, in the Mediterranean sea, or end up as slaves in Libya, from where many manage to engage in the often fatal trip across the Mediterranean (Kebbeh 2013; International Organization for Migration [IOM] 2016).

## The Gambia's Political Economy

Map 1.2: Political Map of The Gambia.



(Taken from Kenburnerdothegambia. Accessed on July 12, 2017  
<http://kenburnerdothegambia.blogspot.com/p/about-gambia.html>)

The Gambia is divided into seven administrative areas, which consist of two municipalities: Banjul and Kanifing; and five regions: West Coast, Lower River, North Bank, Central River and Upper River (see Map 1.2). Banjul is where the national government is seated. The tourism industry is mostly based in Kanifing, in the Kombo St. Mary District (“Kombo” is the pre-colonial name of the area). The five regions are administered by chiefs, while councils in provincial regions are headed by elected chairpersons. Districts and municipalities are divided into wards headed by elected councilors. Geographically, the country is divided into eight Local Government Areas

(LGAs): Banjul, Kanifing, Brikama, Mansakonko, Kerewan, Kuntaur, Janjabureh, and Basse. Since the 1994 Coup, Presidential and parliamentary elections are held every five years, upon which the president designates five non-voting members to the National Assembly. Council members seated in Parliament are elected via local government elections every four years with no term limits for both the presidency and the parliamentarian.

### Geography

The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in Africa. It is located in the West African coast, and occupies a stretches of land over 400km inland from west to east on both side of the River Gambia, which divides the country into two halves (South and North Banks). As a result of colonialism, the country is enveloped to the north, east, and south, by the Republic of Senegal; its beaches border the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The River Gambia runs upwards from the Futa Jallon highlands in Guinea down to the Atlantic Ocean (The Gambia Bureau of Statistics [GBoS], 2007). The climate of the country is Sahelian with a long dry season from November to May followed by a short rainy season from June to October (July and August having the highest precipitation). The River's estuary basin is a tidal inlet with salt-water intrusion, which along with drought limits the irrigable land for agriculture, the country's main economic backbone

### Population

The estimated Gambian population is around 2.05 million inhabitants (CIA Factbook July 2017) with an annual growth rate of 3.3 percent (GBoS 2013). 40.37 percent of the population lives in rural areas, while 59 percent lives in the sole urban area (the greater Banjul), which characterizes this small country with one of the densest populated urban

area on the continent (CIA Factbook 2016). Women constitute 51 percent of the total population (see Table 1.2 below). They have a fertility rate of 5.4 births per woman (GBoS 2013). This high fertility rate has led to the formation of a very youthful population, where 42 percent of youth are below the age of 15, and 22 percent are between the ages of 15 and 24, which bring the population of 24 years of age or less to represent 64 percent of the total population (GBoS 2013).

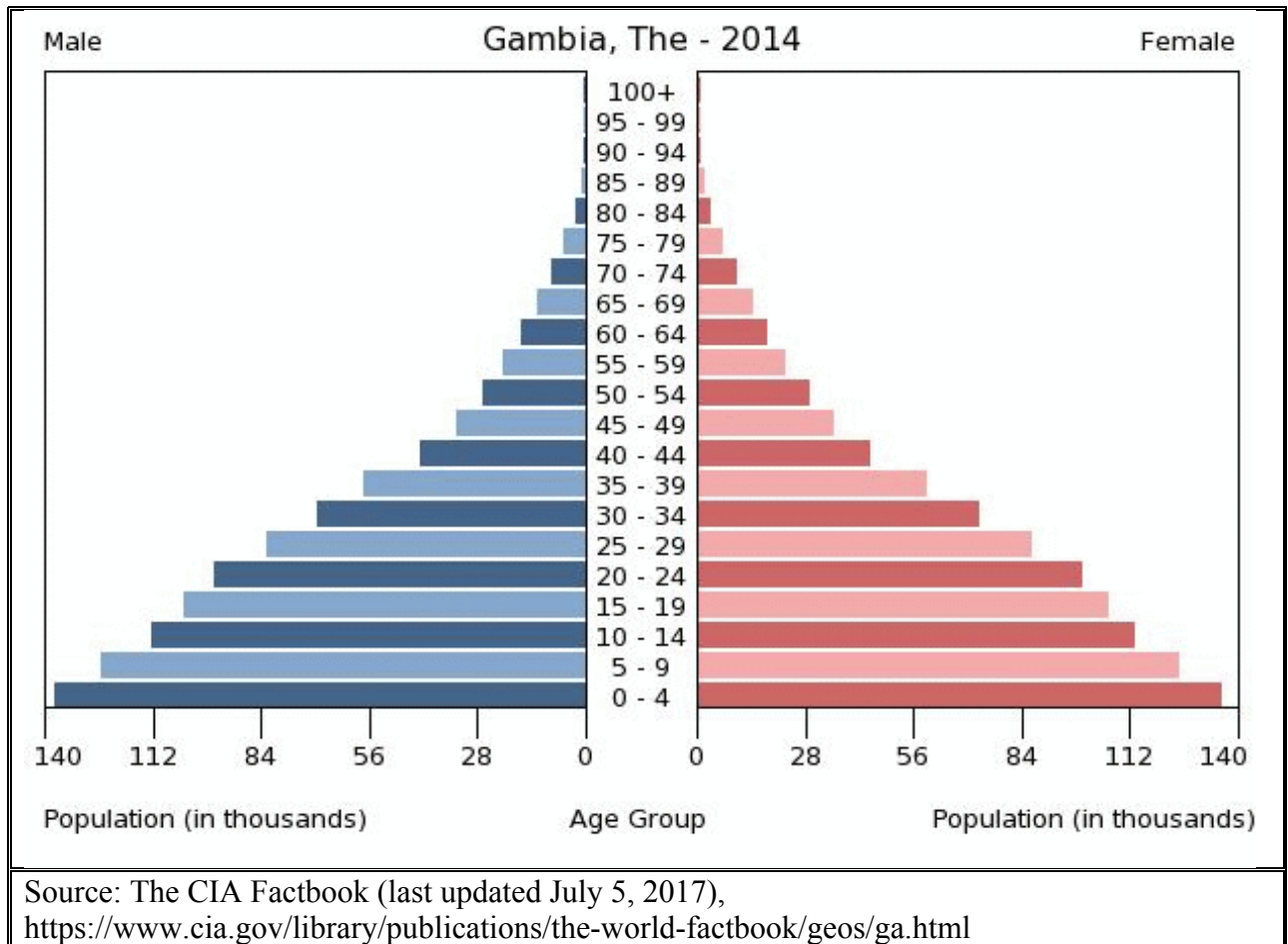
**Table 1.1: Distribution of the Population of The Gambia by Broad Age Groups**

Broad Age Groups	1980				2015			
	0-14	15-24	25-64	65+	0-14	15-24	25-64	65+
West African Averages	44.5	18.5	34.2	2.8	43.8	19.3	34.1	2.8
The Gambia	45.0	19.1	32.9	3.0	46.2	19.6	31.9	2.3

Source: The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), *The Demographic Profile of African Countries*, March 2016, [https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/demographic\\_profile\\_rev\\_april\\_25.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/demographic_profile_rev_april_25.pdf), P. 53.

Young people make up the largest of the population and at the same time experience the biggest unemployment rate of the country at 38 percent (2013). Many of these young people live in urban areas such Banjul, Kanifing, and Brikama (GBoS 2013). The Gambia has a median age of 20 for males and 21 for females. This youthfulness of the national population is in tune with the population of the West African region in general (see Table 1.1 above).

**Table 1.2: The Gambia, Population Pyramid**



The challenge for The Gambia and the continent as whole is to improve the lives of the youth and give them some hope for employment and life improvement through good governance free of corruption and sustainable economic growth. The Gambia has a very poor literacy rate (55.5 percent of the total population, see GBoS 2013; CIA Factbook 2016). The educational gap between males and females is also troubling and, as already indicated, it stems from colonial times when colonial administrators only built a few schools reserved for the education of males, while females were used in domestic work. Similarly, the traditional gender-based division of labor has it that many school-age

girls are expected to stay home and help their mothers with household chores, especially in rural areas. Since parents must pay schools fees, many choose to reserve that expense for boys rather than for girls. Hence, of those who are literate, 63.9 percent are males and 47.6 percent are females (GBoS 2013; UNData Country Profile 2015). This trend has been changing, especially in urban areas, where—unlike in rural areas—both males and females are expected to attend school and perform well. However, here as well, when families fall on hard times, many girls are expected to drop out from school and help out in the household. In fact, many of the women I interviewed who engage in strategic and temporary sex work with mostly European tourists, were either illiterate or just had basic primary education. This limited education of many young women reduces their available options for survival and economic independence. The fact that both male and female youths lived in urban areas situated in and around the tourism development areas (TDA), gives them the opportunity to access, engage, and befriend tourists, hence, their participation in tourism sexual economy. Although there are no general studies of sex workers' socio-demographic profile for the country, I can say—with references to the data I gathered—that most sex workers both male and female I had the chance to interact with were between the ages of 17 and 38, male sex workers can even be above the ages of 45. Some have had a high school education. Many have basic primary school education. A few have not had any exposure to Global North-style education whatsoever, beyond some Quranic education.

In 2015, the average life expectancy rate at birth was 63.4 years (62.5 for men and 65 for women) (CIA Factbook 2016). As the rest of the Senegambian region, The Gambia is home to numerous ethnic groups which include (CIA Factbook 2015)

Mandinka (33.8%), Fula (22.1%), Wolof (12.2%), Jola (10.9%), Serahule (7%), Serer (3.2%), Aku Marabouts/Krios (0.8%), Manjago (2.1%), Bambara (1%), and a significant number of Lebanese and Mauritanian merchants and businesspeople along with European expatriates. Since it has had a very relaxed immigration policy, The Gambia is also home to various migrants from Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea, and refugees from the 1990s' wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These last two countries have a long history of movements of peoples going in both directions. The Gambia's ethnic diversity coincides with its linguistic diversity, even though Wolof is the *lingua franca* in the urban area of the country due to its dominance in popular culture and in surrounding Senegal. English is the official language with cultural languages tied to each ethnic groups bearing the same name. There are cohesive existence and intermarriages among the different ethnic groups.

Several languages are spoken in The Gambia: the major languages are Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Serer, Jola and Serahule; the minor languages are the Manjago, Bambara, Jahanka, Karoninka and Aku. These languages bear the name of their respective ethnic groups. They are not unique to The Gambia alone and are also spoken in the greater Senegambia: Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mauritania, and Mali. These languages correspond to ethnic groups that existed within the Mali Empire. After the demise of the empire, many of these groups dispersed and subdivided into various settlements throughout the Senegambian region.

The languages of The Gambia fall within the family of Niger-Congo languages, which is divided into two sub-groups: the Mande and Atlantic languages. Mande languages, which consist of Mandinka, Bambara, and Jahanke, share some mutual

intelligibility: the Mande peoples share a common history and culture. The Atlantic languages are subdivided into Senegambian languages (Wolof, Fula and Serer) and Bak languages (Jola, Manjago and Balanta), these languages are absolutely not mutually intelligible. Aku is a creolized English-based language initially spoken by the Liberated Africans brought to the region by the British, during their quest to end the slave trade in the area. Although The Gambia is a majority Mandinka country, Wolof serves as lingua franca there as it does as well in Senegal. Senegalese Wolof and Gambian Wolof are slightly different in intonations and pronunciation. Wolof speakers can quickly identify if a speaker is from Senegal or from The Gambia. Urban Wolof in both Senegal and The Gambia borrows from the Arabic, Portuguese, French, and English languages. As a result, many traditionalists would argue that urban Wolof is a bastardized version of “real” Wolof. Despite such assessments, in both The Gambia and Senegal urban Wolof reigns supreme as a general language spoken by many people.

I am a “hybrid” Gambian—my mother is Wolof and my father Mandinka. My matrilineal aunty nicknamed me, as a term of endearment, *Sossseh*, which is a term that evokes my Mandinka identity. In the same way, the different religious groups coexist in harmony. The vast majority of the population is made up of 95.7 percent of Muslims, 4.2 percent of Christians, with the rest practicing traditional religions, all interacting with each other peacefully (CIA World Factbook 2016). Muslims and Christians share their religious celebrations. For example, during *Tobaski* or Eid festival at the end of Ramadan, which is a major Muslim holiday, Muslims cook a dish made up with the lamb they slaughtered for the occasion and share it with their Christian neighbors. At Easter, Christians return the favor by making a dish called *naanmoru*, made from baobab and

rice that they offer to their Muslim neighbors. At Christmas, it is difficult to distinguish Muslims from Christians, for most Gambians partake in the festivities. The main obvious difference is that some go to church on Sunday and others go to the mosque on Friday. Without any doubt, religious civility is enjoyed and cherished by most Gambians in a very relaxed manner.

### Economy

As a market-based economy, The Gambia relies on traditional subsistence agriculture and the tourism industry. Agriculture is actually the country's driving economic engine. Groundnuts (peanuts) are the country's main cash crop, with the production of additional grains such as millet, sorghum, corn, vegetables and rice. Livestock, fisheries, and a few industries such as beer brewery, soft drinks and the fabrication of machines used to process groundnuts also contribute to agricultural productions. Some efforts have been made to diversify agricultural outputs by growing sesame, grown predominantly by women. Rice, while a staple in the country's diet, hasn't reached self-sustaining potential, which has brought the country to import rice for consumption, a practice that began in colonial times.

In 2017 (see Table 1.3), The Gambia's Gross Domestic Product or GDP per capita was \$1,664, which placed the country at the bottom 5<sup>th</sup> percentile in the world and at the 15<sup>th</sup> rank in the list of 30 poorest countries in the world (excluding the failed state of Somalia). This makes The Gambia a country with low economic productivity and a low standard of living. Labeled a "low income country" by the World Bank (CIA World Factbook 2015), The Gambia's struggling economy is heavily dependent on foreign investments and the tourism industry, which is rather unstable in nature. With a

population of about 1,969,709 (CIA World Factbook 2015), The Gambia has 65,000 citizens living abroad (Kebbeh 2013). Most families rely on remittances from those living abroad in the amount of \$115.7 millions per year in 2010 (World Bank 2016), which is equivalent to 10.1 percent of the country's GDP (this does not include unofficial channels of money sending), according to the IMF (Kebbeh 2013). These remittances are mainly coming from Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden. The social fabric of the country is based on family networks, where extended families with more means take care of the well-being of the remaining families. This system of support has helped alleviate hunger, and limits to some extent the state of destitution of many in this poverty-stricken nation. However, many families are lamenting the difficulties of maintaining such a system, which puts a burden on the caring families' ability to save or invest in entrepreneurial ventures.

**Table 1.3: The Gambia Within the 30 Poorest Countries in the World (GDP based on purchasing-power-parity [PPP] Per Capita)**

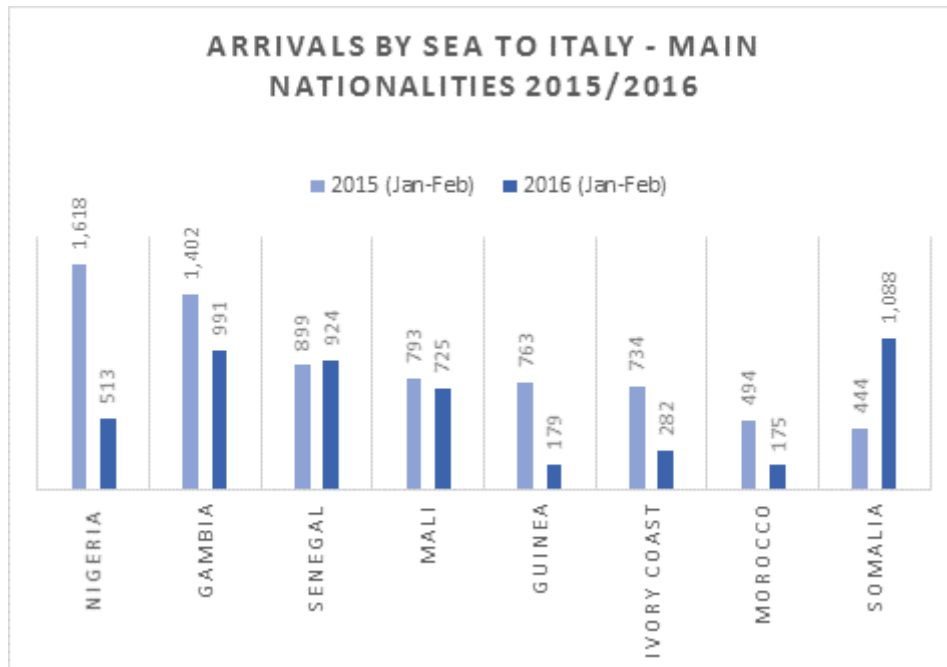
30) Senegal \$2,578	29) Yemen \$2,521	28) Nepal \$2,480	27) Mali \$2,264	26) Benin \$2,184
25) Uganda \$2,066	24) Solomon Islands \$1,995	23) Afghanistan \$1,957	22) Zimbabwe \$1,953	21) Ethiopia \$1,916
20) Rwanda \$1,905	19) Kiribati \$1,820	18) Burkina Faso \$1,790	17) Haiti \$1,784	16) South Sudan \$1,670
<b>15) The Gambia \$1,664</b>	14) Sierra Leone \$1,651	13) Guinea Bissau \$1,568	12) Togo \$1,545	11) Comoros \$1,529
10) Madagascar \$1,504	9) Eritrea \$1,321	8) Guinea \$1,271	7) Mozambique \$1,228	6) Malawi \$1,139
5) Niger \$1,113	4) Liberia \$882	3) Burundi \$818	2) Congo-DRC \$784	1) Central African Republic \$656

Source: Business Insider, (using International Monetary Fund data from 2017), <http://uk.businessinsider.com/the-25-poorest-countries-in-the-world-2017-3?IR=T>. (See also Global Finance at <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world?%20Development%20Updates=&page=12>)

Using the GDP as a measure of economic development comes with limitations, as it does not take into consideration the level of debt a country has or what a country has to pay to service its debt. In 2016, The Gambian debt reached 116.11 percent of its GDP, a 5.9 percentage point rise from 2015, when it was 110.21 percent of GDP (<http://countryeconomy.com/national-debt/gambia>). Another factor that mitigates the measure of economic development of a country is its level of corruption. The Gambia scored an index of perceived corruption of 26 in 2016, where “0” stands for extremely corrupted and “100” for not corrupted at all ([https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2016](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016)).

Many young Gambian men and sometimes women take the “backway,” the trans-Saharan voyage to Libya followed by the often fatal crossing of the Mediterranean Sea to migrate to Europe in very dangerous circumstances and on precarious embarkations (see the figure below and note the disproportionately high number of Gambians involved in comparison with the representation of citizens from much bigger countries).

**Table 1.4: Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals by Nationalities.**



Source: The International Organization for Migration, <https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-2016-160547-deaths-488>

### **Tourism Development and the Gambian Economy**

Tourism is undeniably the most globalized of industries. It generates annual revenues of US\$3 trillion globally (World Tourism Organization or WTO), in seasonal movements that mostly bring residents of Global North countries to locations in the Global South to spend their vacations for a limited period of time. Many scholars have outlined the blatant inequalities that characterize most encounters between Global North tourists and

Global South locals, emphasizing these encounters' contributions to the making and reproduction of neo-colonial power structures (Kempadoo 2004; Enloe 1990; Brennan 2004; Alexander 1997).

In this postcolonial (neocolonial) Gambian economy, most of the tourism infrastructures (hotels, restaurants and bars) are owned and operated by European and Lebanese expatriates, and by—most recently—members of the small Gambian elite. The Kombo St. Mary district was chosen as the site to set up tourism because it borders the Atlantic Ocean and has the country's most beautiful beaches. The scenery of the capital city, Banjul, over-crowded with old poor shanty houses, and lacking modern infrastructure despite the presence of the various ministries housed there, contrasts strikingly with the Kombo and its more modern and trendy buildings; luxury hotels and resorts; shops; lavish houses owned by expatriates and middle and upper class Gambians, most with family ties in the diaspora; embassies and consulates; cafes; nightclubs; restaurants; and the finest beaches. This dichotomy reveals the harsh realities of a struggling African society.

Tourism employs about 125,500 people, while contributing 9.0 percent to The Gambia's GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council 2014 Gambia). The tourism industry is divided into two seasons: the "Winter" season and the "Green" season. The "Winter" season is the high season, while the "Green" season is considered the low season (GTB Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2015-2016). The "Winter" season extends between the months of November until the end of April. The "Green" season lasts from May to the end of October. Likewise, the tourism industry is subdivided into two markets: the "traditional" and "non-traditional" markets. The "traditional" markets are made up of

tourists from those countries that for historical reasons have had their citizens visit the country regularly (Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Spain). Some “non-traditional” markets are emerging from the following countries: the Czech Republic, Poland, Ireland, Nigeria, France, America, Italy, Austria, and The Gambia itself, which accounts for the bulk of visitors in this category (GTB Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2015-2016; GTB Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2015-2016).

Tourists usually stay in and around Kololi beach area’s hotels, resorts, and guesthouses for 14 days on average (GTB Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2015-2016). 50 percent of these tourists are between the ages of 45 and 64 (2016), and their gender make-up is 57 percent male and 43 percent female (GTB Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2015-2016). According to The Gambia Tourism Board or GTB, many tourists engage in excursions to places as diverse as: Katchikaily-“the Crocodile pool”; a visit to the old colonial village of Janjangbureh (also known as Georgetown) upriver; bush and beach safaris; a visit to the village of Juffureh and the former trans-Atlantic trade fort on James Island, renamed Kunta Kinteh Island in 2011<sup>3</sup>; river and fishing trips along the River Gambia; a prehistoric visit to Wassu Stone circles; and lastly with young trained official Gambian tour guides, visits to help “enhance guest-host encounters” (visitthegambia.gm). The Kololi beach tourism area could be posited as a “contact zone,” where disparate cultures meet, and interact with each other in a highly asymmetrical power relations (Pratt *ibid*: 4). When I was growing up in the Bakau area located in the

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<sup>3</sup> [http://worldebooklibrary.org/articles/eng/Kunta\\_Kinteh\\_Island](http://worldebooklibrary.org/articles/eng/Kunta_Kinteh_Island), accessed on July 14, 2017.

Kombo St.Mary district, there were always sights of Global North female tourists hanging out around town with young Gambian men, officially referred to in The Gambia as “bumpsters,” a term used to call guys who made friendships with tourists and who serve as tour guides in hopes of securing a chance to live a trendy lifestyle, receive gifts, and hopefully take advantage of an opportunity to get a visa sponsor to go to “Babylon,” a local expression used to refer to the Global North. The tourists who visit The Gambia are generally working class to lower middle class older Europeans (according to Gambian Tourism Board’s report of 2017, literature on sex tourism in the Gambia, and my own data). They are definitely not from the upper class (The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan 2006). They meet young Gambians in the many bars, restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, guesthouses, and beaches located in the TDA. However, what the GTB doesn’t want to acknowledge is the reality that many tourists visit The Gambia with the plan of engaging in the country’s well-known tourism sexual economy and enjoy young Gambians’ bodies, while on pre-paid vacations. The table below reveals the number of tourist arrivals in 2016 by nationality.

**Table 1.5: Tourists Arrivals by Nationality**

**Monthly Arrivals by Nationality Traditional Markets 2016**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>JAN</b>	<b>FEB</b>	<b>MAR</b>	<b>APR</b>	<b>MA Y</b>	<b>JUN</b>	<b>JUL</b>	<b>AUG</b>	<b>SEP</b>	<b>OCT</b>	<b>N O V</b>	<b>D E C</b>	<b>T O T A L</b>
<b>British</b>	6,206	6,453	5,766	2,645	811	763	830	646	777	968			
<b>Swedish</b>	1,259	980	1,188	315	141	186	183	114	165	410			
<b>Danish</b>	177	199	116	39	37	27	39	31	38	130			
<b>Finnish</b>	1,480	824	244	51	43	45	53	26	44	74			
<b>Norwegian</b>	230	288	178	75	44	113	96	40	64	87			
<b>German</b>	481	503	628	293	179	114	223	146	244	345			
<b>Belgian</b>	486	511	755	389	155	123	197	110	141	609			
<b>Dutch</b>	3,376	3,373	2,484	2,387	398	395	592	597	486	2,858			
<b>Spanish</b>	518	433	614	302	258	238	661	642	365	513			
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,213</b>	<b>13,562</b>	<b>11,973</b>	<b>6,496</b>	<b>2,066</b>	<b>2,005</b>	<b>2,877</b>	<b>2,350</b>	<b>2,323</b>	<b>5,995</b>			

(Source: Gambia Tourism Board, Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2016; the data for the months of November to December have not been reported yet)

As the British colonial state was about to handover power to Gambians for self-rule, it recognized the economic unviability of the new nation. It encouraged the new government of Sir Dawda Jawara to develop a tourism industry that would help the much vulnerable agriculture-based economy that relied heavily on groundnut production to booster its foreign exchange currency reserves and perhaps contribute to energize the country's economy. This project was grounded on a neoliberal understanding of the economy that presupposed that there would be an automatic transfer (trickle-down) of wealth from the rich Global North to the poor The Gambia. It came along with the blessing of the IMF and the World Bank, which facilitated a structural adjustment program to help develop infrastructures for the new tourism sector and aid attracting direct foreign investments and currencies (Dieke 1994; Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond

1979; Mitchell & Fall 2007; Sharpley 2008; Thompson et al 1995). The Gambia and its new government acquiesced and developed a tourism industry in 1965.

The tourism industry began with 300 tourists visiting The Gambia in 1965, which was facilitated by a Swedish company named Vingressor/Club 33 (The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan 2006; Dieke 1994; Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979). This company marketed the country as an exotic sun and beach destination that would allow rich Swedes to escape the cold winter months. By 1967, the arrival numbers began increasing and The Gambia's government looked to expand their foreign exchange earnings with the tourism industry. In 1970, the Gambian government designated 1,000 meters of the Kombo beach area that stretches from Kololi to Kartong as a TDA. While at the time, the late 1960s, there were only 162 beds available for tourists, by 1971 300 beds were available (The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan 2006; Dieke 1994; Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979). The number of arrivals jumped from 300 in 1965 to 2,601 in 1971. What is of significance is that the Gambian government had been won over to the idea of the economic viability of the tourism industry as a sector that could help diversify the economy. The important question to answer then became: from where would the funds necessary to develop this TDA come? The question was unavoidable as the country only had a small private sector and a narrow tax base to count on at the time. Unsurprisingly, the World Bank stepped in to provide the loan revenue to support this growth (The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan 2006; Dieke 1994; Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979)

At the time, the World Bank had created the International Development Association (IDA) in order to provide loans to countries that could not get loans from the

open market. The IDA loan made it possible for the Gambian government to start building its infrastructure and tourism related development projects. It built a road linking hotels to the airport and the TDA, including the administrative district in Banjul. This came with public investments into the industry with little tax base to sustain it. Until today, the Gambian tourism sector has not become a major tourist destination such as Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, and Senegal. The Gambian tourism development plan had always been centered on increasing the number of arrivals rather than attempting to channel tourists' spending patterns. Most tourists who visit The Gambia come on pre-paid tourist packages which means that most of their immediate costs (airfare and hotel accommodation) are paid for outside of the country prior to their arrival in The Gambia. The industry is largely supported by chartered flight companies that offers pre-paid packages to tourists. Since tourism was mainly a government enterprise, the industry didn't have a lot of private investors, and the government either funded the building of hotels or partnered with foreign investors for their construction. Such arrangements meant that the government had to give up tax holidays to their investors, which left the Gambian government with little capacity to earn income from taxation. The world economic crisis in the late 1970s lead to economic decline, and the country fell into heavy debts that it was unable to pay back. By the 1980s, the government's inability to sustain the industry led it to leave marketing activities and promotion of the industry in the hands of foreign tour operators (The Gambia Tourism Development Master Plan 2006; Dieke 1994; Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979; Mitchell & Fall 2007; Sharpley 2008; Thompson et al 1995).

When the Jammeh government seized power, it too saw the tourism industry as an option to increase foreign investment, foreign exchange earnings, infrastructure development, revenue creation, and employment generation. This kind of thinking and policy is unfortunately highly problematic because, as many tourism scholars have noted, leisure tourism provides very limited linkages to the local economy and as such it keeps many in local population with little benefit—if any at all—from the industry (see the work of Dieke 1994; Harrel-Bond and Harrell-Bond 1979; for similar arguments developed for the Caribbean, see Enloe 1989).

Jammeh's government decided to take a slightly different approach from its predecessor, by deciding to work with a UK development group to assess how to implement a sustainable tourism development plan. Hence, in 2000, Jammeh's administration created the Gambia Tourism Authority (GTA), a public agency mandated to develop, regulate and promote the tourism industry. The GTA, in an effort to reduce leakages and bring in all concerned stakeholders together, commissioned a study sponsored by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) in an effort to bring together informal and formal sectors of the tourism industry. This project ran for 20 months from August 2000 to March 2002, with help from the Gambian Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET).

They collected participatory surveys about the perception of tourists, tour operators, hoteliers and ground handlers. While the informal sector (dominated by tourist taxi drivers<sup>4</sup>, craft market vendors, official tourist guides, juice pressers and fruit sellers,

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<sup>4</sup> The Gambia has two kinds of taxis: the regular taxis, which are yellow, and the tourist taxis, which are green. Tourist taxis are supposed to have a license issued by the Gambia

small hotel and guesthouse owners, ground tour operators) participated in the research phase, they were asked to identify what they saw as barriers to their full participation in the tourism industry along with reporting on their sales during the peak season, where they were given an agenda based on their identified barriers in order to help them increase their sales and income. The formal sector was represented by the Gambia Hotel Association (GHA) and the Ground Handlers and Equipment Hirers Association (GHEHA)—these are inbound tour operators who hold contracts with the originating market operators—and UK operators (The Gambia Experience, Tui/Thomson, First Choice, Thomas Cook, Panorama, Odyssey and My Travel) bring tourist on pre-paid packages. The formal sector got many opportunities to sit with government officials to discuss how they could help improving market access to facilitate sales and income increase. At the same time, they were expected to discuss/report about their views on the informal sector. The end result of this research project brought about a dossier called “The Gambia Tourism Development Master plan 2006,” which identified several issues to be resolved and agreed upon by the tourism stakeholders (Informal and Formal Sector and the government). Issues identified as hindrances to the potential growth of tourism were:

- Limited growth associated with loss of market share for The Gambia in the key originating markets, and principally in the UK.
- Limited air access restricting market possibilities.

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Tourism Authority in order to have access to tourist clients and enter the Senegambian Strip (tourism hub of The Gambia, with hotels, restaurants, bars, and night clubs). Further discussion of these taxi drivers will be done in chapter 4.

- Poor financial returns (low tariffs, short season, etc.) and unforeseen crises such as political instability or unforeseen disaster (such as the Ebola crisis in 2015).
- Limited product portfolio and lack of differentiation.
- Lack of Uniformity in standards and quality in the physical development of the TDA.
- Poor utilities such as electricity and running water.
- Social issues such as a problem known as the “bumsters” (bomsers) phenomenon (beach boys that befriend tourists). (The Gambia Tourism Master Plan 2006:21)

These issues were identified as having a damaging impact on the tourism industry. The Gambia government made certain moves to resolve them. The interesting point that should be noted is that, the document only talks about the “bumsters” issue and not about the male and female sex workers that service tourists in the Kololi beach areas and in the general TDA. In an effort to deal with these problems, Jammeh’s government enacted policies to curtail the social issues by creating a tourism security unit that handled state-sanctioned violence against the “bumsters.” As I argue in chapter 4, the government could choose to not deal with the relevant social issues because it was easier and more convenient to deal with these issues using its known repressive measures.

This dissertation focuses on social issues linked to the tourism industry and its sexual economy. It aims to disentangle and examine the multi-layered sexual encounters of Global North tourists and young Gambian men and women, the phenomenology of the eventual short relationships that often ensue, and their long-term consequences if any on

those involved. My approach considers relevant local and transnational socioeconomic, cultural and political contexts that shape tourism-based sexual economy, with the intention to reveal the quite different perspectives of all involved. I want to proceed with respect for the subtle particularities of individual positionalities and circumstances. Indeed, Global North tourists do generally engage in The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy for different reasons than young Gambian men and women do. While the middle-class white European tourists are looking for sexual and/or affective and emotional experiences with people younger than they are—experiences that they seem to have difficulties getting in their countries of origin (Aziz 1994; Nyanzi et al 2005; Belliveau 2006)—the Gambian men and women are initially driven to participate informally in tourism's sexual economies for financial reasons as there are very few job opportunities available. Many young Gambians cannot find formal employment in the tourism industry for lack of the necessary education that would allow them to access the industry's best jobs, which are in any case rather limited in number and are often reserved for expats.

For the sake of this dissertation, I largely focus my attention on these social issues, standing to engage in a critical analysis of the impact of the tourism industry on the social lives of Gambians.

### **A Glimpse at Gambian Society in Gender and Sexuality**

In The Gambia, “traditions,” Islam, and modernity give shape—not always jointly—to gender relations. Although Gambians generally do not practice a strict and conservative form of Islam as one could find in many countries of the Arab world, it does

however share a commonality with these regions is the normalizing of male privilege and recognition over women, just as-a-matter-of-factly.

religious and cultural conceptions of the boy-child as the (future) head of household who will continue the family line affect children of both sexes. Boy-children are socially and materially privileged, while for girl-children discrimination has both psychological and economic consequences. Many internalize their disprivilege, affecting their sense of dignity and individual integrity and hence their sexuality throughout their lives. (Touray 2006:78)

Many Gambian women and men accept gender-specific roles without questioning them. Women and girls are socialized to believe in the “naturalization” of their subordinated roles. Many women feel inclined to accept their secondary status as women regardless of their class, educational, social and religious backgrounds. Since Islam heavily influences gender and sexuality, Islamic personal law controls issues of marriage, divorce, widowhood, inheritance, custody, sex and sexuality (Touray 2006; Chant and Touray 2012). In The Gambia, polygamy is deeply engrained and cuts across boundaries of socioeconomic background. Part and parcel of Gambian masculinity is having multiple relations, which is generally tolerated by women.

In general, boys are expected to make the first move in establishing a relationship; a move that both boys and girls see the expression of the “natural” order of things. Many young females told me that they will never approach a guy for they fear to be seen as easy girls. Take for instance Jatou’s comment:

Here, girls do not approach boys because this would make the boys disrespect you and treat you like you’re cheap. For me, a boy must approach me first, even if I

like him, if he doesn't make the first move, I will never approach him first (Interview January 2016).

Sylvia Chant's work on adolescent sexuality in The Gambia revealed that by ages 14 or 15 most young women and men have engaged in some form of sexual relations, where the boys were more likely the initiators (Chant 2013). Although boys are expected to experiment sexually more so than young women, young women on the other hand are expected to safeguard their virginity and not be seen as engaging in sexual activities as unmarried women. As noted in Skramstad's work, and I am in total agreement with her observation, "men rarely gain a bad reputation due to sexual behavior" (Skramstad 2008:55-56), even if they have multiple encounters with local girls or Global North tourists. Women thought of as promiscuous and unruly run the risk of being labelled "prostitutes," which lessen their chances of finding a husband.

In The Gambia, relationships are very much tied to exchanges between family member, lovers and friends. This exchange is linked to the principle of *teranga* (roughly meaning "hospitality"). Whatever the type of relationship one enters into, it is expected that the people involved will take care of each other in many different ways and according to their abilities to provide. Parents take care of their children with an expectation that once older, the children will in turn take care of them in their older age. Children who take care of their parents and older relatives are seen as well mannered, and respectful offsprings who have and show good disposition towards their parents and relatives. While this is expected from both male and female children, often the heavy financial expectation is placed on the male child, while the heavy social and the day-to-day taking care of an aging parent falls squarely on female children. These exchanges in

parent-children relationships speak to the nature of how affect is intimately linked to material exchanges between parents and children.

Whether rich or poor, men in general are expected to demonstrate their affection, at least in the early stage of a courtship, by giving material gifts and money to their female partners. These gestures may include but not limited to phone credit, groceries, body lotions and perfumes, garments, money, houses, cars, land, and so forth. The choice of the gift depends on what the male partner is able to afford. In return, women are generally expected to take care of the men's needs, by cooking, cleaning, providing affection, and eventually sexual favors. During my fieldwork, many of the women I spoke to expressed that they know that a man likes them by how generous he is towards them. In same-sex liaisons, material and affective exchanges take place between the guys routinely, with both male partners being expected to provide material resources to each other. While for the heterosexual male Gambian to female tourists liaisons, men are expected to be the material provider. However, in *jeggs* - toyboys relationships, these roles are reversed because the *jeggs* are much more financially able than their toyboys. Even in marriages, an interested groom must bring a gift—called the first gift—to the family of the bride-to be in order for the marriage to take place upon acceptance of his gift by the bride's family. The first gift generally shows that the man is interested in marrying a girl.

When a couple marries, it is expected that the husband will be a provider, and that the wife will take care of the household and of her husband's sexual and affective needs. Indeed, intimacy and affective exchanges are not divorced from ordinary practices of

exchange, and material reciprocity. This is how social relations are structured and how affect and care circulate in all the country's ethnic groups.

The Gambia's socio-sexual norms and practices are undergoing transformations due in great part to the dynamics of globalization. It is in such a moving landscape that Gambian socio-sexual actors acknowledge or transgress socio-sexual norms and practices, and local understandings of love to engage in different sexual-affective exchanges or enter in cross-generational arrangements, same-sex interactions, or transnational partnerships. Many Africanists scholars have emphasized that transactional sex between older men called sugar daddies and young women called sugar-babies, should also be understood as affective relationships (see Hunter 2002, LeClerc-Madlala 2003; Haram 2004).

This dissertation seeks to highlight how Gambian socio-sexual norms and practices shape the ways in which socio-sexual actors engage in the sexcape and eventually also in the tourism-based sexual economy. The following chapters seek to illuminate these lived realities.

## CHAPTER II

### Looking at The Gambia as a Sexscape: the Formation of a Tourism-Based Sexual Economy

Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies. (Foucault 1978:103)

Since the beginning of the 1990s, The Gambia has gained a reputation as a sex tourism destination for global north—and mostly Western European—tourists. It has become a place where it is not uncommon to meet inter-racial “couples” in public spaces (restaurants and bars, the streets, the beach, etc.), who sometimes exhibit or perform “affection” for each other by walking hand-in-hand. Age difference between these couple-partners is certainly one of their main characteristics. Indeed, as I argue in this chapter, The Gambia has attracted older, white, male and female global north tourists to vacation cheaply and to enjoy sun, sea, and sex with young, poverty-stricken Gambians, and other West Africans.

The principal objectives of this chapter are: 1) to present a brief history of the formation of The Gambia as a “sexscape”; and 2) to draw a kaleidoscopic view of the complexity of the Gambian sexscape, and within it of the place occupied by The Gambia’s tourism sexual economy. I identify nine socio-sexual scripts that make the Gambian sexscape, however only six of those scripts are central to The Gambia’s tourism sexual economy and are dealt with in this dissertation.

As a Gambian female doing research on The Gambia's tourism's sexual economy, I have often been asked by Gambians both in The Gambia and in the diaspora (mostly Miami and Atlanta in the US, and London in the UK) why I am doing such a study about the *chaga* (the Wolof word for "prostitute"). The question, most of the time exclaimed with incredulity, always comes with a moral condemnation of the "prostitute" and a preoccupation to make me realize of the risks for my good reputation such a study entails. You do not want to be seen or mistaken for a *chaga* for hanging out in the bars where the *chagas* hangout, I am told. Along with such well-meaning advice usually comes a flurry of opinions about how the tourism industry has turned many young Gambians to *chagatou*<sup>5</sup>, sex work with the *toubabs*<sup>6</sup>. This was the focus of a comment by a 35 year-old woman from Kanifing, whose opinion matched what many people I spoke to had to say:

Toubab have turned our country into a place where young people are prostituting themselves, they come here and give these girls money, and the girls give their precious bodies to them, not worrying about their tomorrow. When they enter into that lifestyle because of money they become damaged goods and no one will want to marry them, for they are loose girls and no one wants to marry a loose

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<sup>5</sup> I have decided to translate *chagatou* into sex working rather than prostitution even though many Gambians understand it as "prostitution," for it carries a stigmatizing, negative connotation.

<sup>6</sup> *Toubab* (in Wolof) or *Toubabo* (in Mandinka) is a racialized term used in both The Gambia and Senegal to describe white people. Over time it has been used to also describe foreigners in general. However, even when used that way, it is always understood as having some form of racialized connotation. Black foreigners are described as *toubab bu nule* (a black/white, highlighting their racial foreign-ness, always seen as superior). Gambians who have been exposed to western ways or act "white" are also said to be *toubab*. Over the years, the term has begun to mean also higher social and economic class.

girl, you can't bring a chaga into your parents home for marriage! (Interview November 2016)

These comments reveal a very gendered idea of sex work in The Gambia, as they consider exclusively female-centered sex work rather than male and female sex work. In The Gambia's patriarchal society sex work is automatically assumed to be performed by women, not men, which speaks to the ways in which women sexualities are viewed, surveilled and monitored. In The Gambia, socialization is a driving engine that passes down social mores from generation to generation, along values, and expectations. Girls from an early age are taught and expected to help their mothers with domestic chores (cooking, laundry, farming and child care), while exhibiting good behavior and self-respect. Boys on the other hand are educated by their fathers and male relatives on how to become a man: they are taught to do tasks that are considered to be masculine, such as hunting, farming, gathering firewood, but not domestic chores. In The Gambia, both girls and boys are expected to show respect and deference to their elders. The gender division of labor between girls and boys creates an environment that fosters girls to be more domestically-oriented, while also learning how to cater to men. This reinforced male authority puts women in a secondary role in society.

Colonialism also reinforced patriarchal systems by setting up policies that encouraged and fostered such gender bias during the colonial period to please male peanut farmers (see chapter 1; see also the work of Carney and Watts 1991).

In The Gambia, families from all ethnic groups expect girls to uphold their virginity until marriage, and to perform gender humility in public, avoiding being seen as associated with sexual activities. Being seen as a *chaga* runs contrary to these ideals: a

“good” girl/woman should not hang out in bars known to cater to foreigners late at night. It is popular knowledge that many toubabs come to The Gambia in search of sex with young Gambians. Therefore, if a young Gambian woman is seen hanging around with a toubab, she will automatically be suspected of engaging in sex outside of marriage, which will stigmatize her for being a chaga—hence, a “bad” girl/woman who is not marriageable material. Local Gambians tend to focus their comments about the country’s tourism-based sexual economy on gendered ideals and issues of respectability and moral decay.

Gambians living abroad (in the US and the UK) talk of how “these poor and tired toubabs are coming into our country to sleep with our young people giving them nothing but pennies for it.” Though there are similarities in the perceptions that local and diasporic Gambians have of tourism’s impact on Gambian society, diasporic Gambians tend to extend their observations and comments to include economics (relative wealth of the tourists and abject poverty of the Gambians), the age disparity between tourists and Gambians, and the ease of tourists’ geographic mobility. That is, diasporic Gambians speak of poor and decrepit toubabs not worthy of sleeping with young fellow citizens. Here is a comment from a 28 year-old man from Atlanta:

Boy, let’s face it, the toubabs who come to our country are the poor and tired old people, they come with their little money to impress our people because of poverty, the little money that they bring becomes a lot in the Gambia. This gives them the power to get anybody they want. Whenever I go back home, it gets me angry to see an old tired toubab with a nice good looking girl, and you know it is because of the money, she is just selling herself to this raggedy toubab. And the

“bumsters” are no different, I don’t understand how you can sleep with a grandma, boy that is serious, you know if money wasn’t involved they wouldn’t be together, they can’t catch good looking young people in their own countries like that. (Interview July 2016)

This comment was generally indicative of the feelings of many diasporic Gambians towards Global North tourists in The Gambia’s tourism sexual economy. They really take offense, in kind of a nationalist way, from the fact that working class white toubabs with limited economic resources are able to come to their country to take advantage of their fellow Gambian citizens for what is—at the end of the day—very small compensation. As diasporic people who left their country to try to “make something of themselves,” even if only in the working class of their host countries, they are in dismay to see working class toubabs who often exhibit racist sentiments in their home countries coming to their country to get easy access to young Gambian bodies.

This chapter has for objective to highlight the different socio-sexual scripts that characterize what I call “the Gambian sexscape and its sexual economies.” This allows for the presentation of the Gambian sexscape as providing spaces for encounters between differently motivated socio-sexual actors or agents. The scripts I have identified as constituting the Gambian sexscape are: 1) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older European women and young Gambian and other West African men; 2) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older European men and young Gambian and other West African women; 3) the mostly homosexual (MSM) interactions between older European men, Gambian men, and Gambian “semesters” and young Gambian and other West African men; 4) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older Gambian men,

and sometimes also older European expats (“sugar-daddies”) and young Gambian and other West African women (“sugar/honey-babies”); 5) the mostly heterosexual interactions between older Gambian women (*jigeg*) and young Gambian men (“toyboy”); 6) the active participation of Gambian men of Lebanese origin as pimps, brothel owners, and clients of Gambian sex workers; 7) Indian and Bangladeshi local businesses’ middle-managers who seek Gambian female sex workers in the rare local brothels catering to local Gambian men and in bars catering to global north tourists; 8) the mostly heterosexual socio-sexual encounters between local Gambian men and Gambian and other West African female sex workers in local brothels<sup>7</sup>; 9) the mostly heterosexual socio-sexual encounters between Gambian male semesters and local Gambian women.

The chapter also considers the role played by—more specifically male—diasporic Gambians (called “semesters” when they visit their country for vacation) in the making of the Gambian “sexscape.” I am particularly interested in what the semesters’ phenomenon and specifically the semesters-Gambian locals socio-sexual interactions reveal about the importance of gender, class, and ethnic belonging in the social hierarchy that migration establishes. While young male semesters mostly want to have a good time during their vacation, local young Gambian women look for possible marriage opportunities.

### **Theorizing The Gambian Sexscape, its Tourism-Based Sexual Economy, and its Socio-Sexual Scripts**

In his important essay, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” Arjun Appadurai (1996) offered critical vocabularies to discuss kinds of global economic

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<sup>7</sup> I didn’t conduct research among those.

and social domination that go against the world view attached to a simplistic understanding of global dominance based on a center-periphery model (Appadurai 1996). Instead, Appadurai described five types of landscapes that provide the necessary conceptual tools to unpack what he calls the “new global cultural economy” or “dimensions of global cultural flow”: *ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *mediascapes*, and *ideoscapes*. These scapes are unstable and constantly in flux (Appadurai 1996:31). For the sake of this dissertation, my interest particularly lays on Appadurai’s “ethnoscape,” which he defines as a landscape that allows people to move between nations (tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers) in an unprecedented manner, wherein persons or groups deal with having to move or have fantasies about wanting to move locally, regionally or internationally (Appadurai 1990:32). This notion—I think—is of great use to make sense of Gambian realities. To begin with, The Gambia is host to many immigrants from neighboring West African countries, many villagers migrate to the city to seek better opportunities. To escape from poverty, help their families, and perform an ideally provider-masculinity, [1] Gambian youths do migrate and dream of migrating to the global North, often at the risk of losing their lives in the Mediterranean sea when taking the “backway” (see chapter 1). While Appadurai’s scapes have provided very useful tools and vocabularies to make sense of globalization and its macro-structural trends, it has fallen short of considering how these large-scale global processes impact individuals and their intimate lives in specific cultural settings. This is exactly what anthropologists whose work on globalization and tourism’s sexual economies have done. Indeed, Denise Brennan (2004); Mark Padilla (2007) and Mark Padilla et al (2007) have highlighted the importance of macro-level political

economic structures and their interactions on global subjects' views (their cultural understanding) of love, intimacy, and sexuality. Mark Padilla et al. (2007) revealed how large-scale global processes have influenced intimate aspects of people's lives. They challenge us to focus our attentions on how these large-scale processes are embodied and experienced by individuals in their daily lives, eventually creating new forms of subjectivities that contribute to the "political economy of love" (Padilla et al, xii). The "love" in "political economy" stems from an understanding—following Foucault (1978) and Giddens (1992)—that intimacy, which includes sexual intimacy, is inherently tied to—for example—social, and economic inequalities. This underscores the central importance of the concept of "sexual economy" in this dissertation for its signaling the "intersection between economic systems and social life" as Ara Wilson (2004:9) theorized it. Similarly, M. Jacqui Alexander described slavery in the antebellum South as a "sexual economy" due to the "interplay of sex and markets" (2009:217).

As should be obvious at this point, this dissertation is very much inspired by the work of scholars (Brennan 2004; Cabezas 2009; Padilla 2007, Cole 2009), whose compelling ethnographies on the sexual economies of tourism have uncovered the intersection between global economic systems and social life. I am also in debt to those who have shown how any sexual encounter, even the most intimate and emotionally charged, is always and irremediably a social phenomenon.

In *What's Love Got to Do With It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*, Denise Brennan refers to the town of Sosua as a "sexscape," a notion that she understands as a "new kind of global sexual landscape and sites within it" (Brennan 2004:15). Building on Appadurai's five dimensions of global cultural flows

(1990), Brennan's sexscape links sex work to global economic forces, places where the "exotic is manufactured into the erotic both privately and publicly, where the sex trade becomes the focal point of a place" (2004:16). For Brennan, the defining characteristics of the sexscape are: (1) international travel from the developed to the developing world, (2) consumption of paid sex, and (3) inequality that is based on race, gender, class, and nationality (2004:16). Though one can make the argument that the sexscape expands virtually all over the world, how the various spaces within it operate and function is very much tied to historical global inequalities and local particularities. Denise Brennan (2004) and Dennis Altman (2001) have pointed out that though in Global North spaces such as Frankfurt, Rome, New York, Amsterdam – where there are sex trade-focused red-light districts—the sex trade does not define the entire economic and social life of these cities (Brennan 2004:16). Tourists eventually visiting these red-lights districts do not associate all female citizens as being readily available for paid sex. However, in The Gambia, as is the case in other Global South locations, all Gambian females and males are assumed by Global North tourists visiting the country as fully available for sexual "consumption." They assume that all young Gambians are on the look-out to catch a Toubab.

While I was doing my fieldwork, I was constantly approached by Global North male tourists in the most mundane places outside of the TDA, such as the supermarket or local eateries, as if I were participating in the tourism sexual economy. For Brennan, the sexscape—embedded in a globalized economy—comes with global hierarchies of race, class, gender, citizenship, and access to geographic mobility that all point to unequal access to power and opportunities among actors involved in these transnational spaces

that tourism creates (2004:16). As a tourism-focused transnational space, The Gambia provides an excellent illustration of unequal access to power and opportunities between foreign tourists and local Gambians, all grounded on hierarchies based on race, class, gender, nationality, religion, mobility, and age. In the Gambian transnational space that tourism provides and which I call the Gambian sexscape, working and middle class Global North tourists can afford to capitalize on these structural differences to satisfy their racialized sexual fantasies, living comfortably with their pension checks thanks to the lower cost of living for those who have foreign currencies while traveling internationally without constraints. On the other hand, local Gambians have nothing to capitalize on when considering these hierarchies, except their bodies—if they are young enough.

Although this dissertation is very much inspired by Brennan’s concept of “sexcape,” I must however seek to expand it to properly fit the examination of Gambian realities. Brennan’s concept is ethnographically and analytically grounded in heterosexual commercial sex between Sosuan female sex workers and their European male clients in a predominantly Judeo-Christian society: the Dominican Republic. The Gambian sexscape I foreground here involves a variety of social actors (local Gambian men and women, diasporic Gambians, Lebanese Gambians, Global North tourists, Expats, Migrants from neighboring countries and Asia, well-to-do Older Gambian men [Sugar-daddies] and their much-younger-girlfriends [honey-babies]) and Older Gambian women (jigek) and their younger “toyboy” Older European, Gambian Men, and semesters who sleep with Gambian and other West African men in and out of the tourism industry who are engaged in different socio-sexual arrangements not limited to “paid”

heterosexual sex in a majority Muslim context. My conceptualization of the Gambian sexscape is such that it ends up being larger than my object of study—the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy—since it includes (at least) the nine socio-sexual scripts presented above: heterosexual interactions between older Europeans (men and women) and young Gambian and other West African men and women; mostly homosexual (MSM) interaction between older European, Gambian, and Gambian “semesters” men; sugar-daddies and sugar/honey-babies; Older Gambian women (jigeg) and young Gambian men (toyboy); Gambian Lebanese serving as pimps, mediators, brothel owners and clients of Gambian sex workers; Indian and Bangladeshi local middle-managers who seek Gambian female sex workers in local brothel and bars catering to tourists; Gambian semesters interactions with young local Gambians. These are the six socio-sexual scripts I mostly focus on in this dissertation. I see them as embedded in the larger Gambian sexscape. I justify the definition of the sexscape as wider than my object of study—in doing that my approach differs from Brennan’s—because it gives me the opportunity to refer to scripts that are not directly related to the tourism-based sexual economy but which nonetheless do inform—as will be pointed out at various occasions in the following pages—the actual scripts under scrutiny: from the perspective of the Gambian socio-sexual actors engaged in the tourism-based sexual economy, they are part of their reality, as those other scripts might be what these actors might face later on in their personal trajectories, or might be an inspiration for the establishment of particular arrangements in the context of another script. These scripts are not silos. They are related to each other. The notion of “script” (further discussed below) provides a

convenient way for me to organize reality and to analytically describe the larger sexscape within which my object of study is located.

As announced in the epigraph to this chapter, my theoretical premise, which justifies the borrowing and redrawing of the concept of “sexscape” to fit the Gambian context, is that no sexual interaction exists without involving—always—matters of the social world. The latter includes social norms and their trespassing, gender roles and their inversions, sexual scripts as more or less spontaneously performed. The expression “socio-sexual” doesn’t do anything but proclaim the fact that the sexual—the ultimate goal (or at least one of the most important ones) of most interactions described in the scripts—never comes alone. The two or more sexual partners involved are not simply there, naked in front of each other, as if their nakedness meant that they were deprived of the many values of the social world they were immersed in when they were dressed. Instead, the formulation declares that the sexual is always necessarily intertwined with its more or less immediate socio-cultural and economic environments.

John Gagnon and William Simon (1973) lay out the theorizing of sexual scripts, which is rooted in social constructionism (see Blumer 1930), symbolic interactionism (see Goffman 1959), and dramaturgy (Henslin and Biggs 1971). Gagnon and Simon’s premise is that all social behaviors are socially scripted. They are derived from shared beliefs within a particular social group and provide a path to give meaning to reality, to interpret it, including human behaviors (Gagnon and Simon 1973; DeLamater and Hyde 1998). The human behavior that Gagnon and Simon theorized is sexual, and its meaning and understanding is derived from sets of scripts that actors learned from their social world (Simon and Gagnon 2003). Human behaviors in social life are operated and

guided by an “operating syntax” (Simon and Gagnon 1984:53). Cultural scenarios play a significant role because they provide social actors with context, institutions and symbols to make up life (Simon and Gagnon 2003; Gagnon 1990; Simon 1996). These authors identified three main social-sexual scripts (“sexual cultural scripts,” “interpersonal scripts,” and “intrapsychic scripts”). Sexual cultural scripts are cultural scenarios in a dramaturgical sense that provide the playing field of sexuality with paths to follow or engage in, where actors have roles to play among themselves; they are not simply correlated with sexual behaviors because they do not provide enough guidance to dictate actual interpersonal behaviors in specific contexts. This is reserved for “interpersonal scripts,” through which social actors use knowledge from their cultural scenarios and adapt it to their own reality or situation, where two or more participating actors engage in a complex act involving mutual dependency (Gagnon and Simon 1973(18). In the interpersonal scripts, harmony will exist if the actors have shared or similar scripts, but disharmony may exist if the actors do not share similar scripts (Wiederman 2005). “Individual internal scripts” of experience unfold at the intrapsychic level called the “intrapsychic scripts.” This is where actors use specific plans or strategies to carry out their interpersonal scripts (Simon and Gagnon 1986; 1987; 2003). Intrapsychic scripts includes fantasies, memories, and mental rehearsals that allow actors to work out the difficulties involved in enacting their interpersonal scripts in the general context of cultural scenarios: this gives individuals a unique sexuality that may not be put into words (Gagnon and Simon 1984:54). Since its introduction, scripting theory has been used to explore sexuality across different populations and contexts (see Frith and

Kitzinger 1997, 2001; Plummer 1998; Hyde and Oliver 2000; Ankomah 1999; Smith 2000).

Scripts of sexuality within Africa in general are tied to traditional values and practices imposed during colonial time, as well as religious traditions and practices (Arnfred 2004; Groes-Green 2014; Haram 2004; Tamale 2011). These cultural scenarios provide scripts in the context of rites of passage generally performed around puberty that include instructions on gender and sexual matters. This is so even though customs and scripts vary across ethnic groups. The common themes are that after undergoing rites of passage, an individual will marry and be a parent. To do all that, sexual activity is regulated by norms of courtship and marriage, where sex is primarily for procreation and perhaps pleasure for the continuation of the family and larger kin group. My use of “socio-sexual” parallels my understanding of the sexscape as directly related to The Gambia’s social structure and its logics. As Anthony Giddens has aptly pointed out, “sexuality functions as a malleable feature of self... a connecting point between body, self-identity and social norms” (1992:15). That is to say notions of intimacy, sex, and sexuality do not exist in a vacuum and should be viewed instead as a direct expression of socio-cultural and historical matters.

Any discussion and theorizing of The Gambian sexscape must first begin with a discussion of colonial influences on Gambians’ socio-sexual subjectivities. The following sections are attempts to unpack Gambian socio-sexual subjectivities by highlighting the importance of colonialism, Christianity, Islam, and local traditional influences.

## **A Brief Outline of African Sexualities' Topology**

There are rich historical accounts of African sexualities by Africans in the narratives of *griots*, or in The Gambia's *jelis* and *guelwels*'s songs and folklore. Such oral texts provide the material culture related to eroticism in the making of jewelry, scents, dances, names and naming systems. Written historic accounts of African sexualities come from 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial and missionary writings at the peak of European colonial and imperial expansion on the African continent (Tamale 2011:14). These writings are imbued with thematic schemas that worked to depict Africa and Africans as nothing but savages living on a dark continent. Colonialism's Othering processes were at the core of European imperialism's intellectual production (Fanon 1967; Said 1979; Alexander and Mohanty 1997; Schick 1999). As Irvin Schick aptly pointed out, "alteritism was not only used for a rhetoric of control and domination, it also served alongside a rhetoric of more obscure desires: sexual desires or fears related to class, religion, nationality linked to racial anxieties, confusion and or outright self-loathing" (Schick 1999:23). Thus according to Schick, alterity served as a discursive tool to intimately link the "social construction of space and societal disparities of power," where "place reflects and reproduces power relations" (Schick 1999:13). Spatially, Africa has been constructed in colonial and in postcolonial times as the "dark continent" continually juxtaposed to enlightened/developed Europe/the Global North, which also marked African bodies and sexualities as primitive and exotic (McClintock 1995; Mohanram 1999; Young 1995). Where African sexualities are posited as immoral, bestial and lascivious (Mama 1996; Magubane 2001) by colonial authorities, scholarship on African gender and sexualities have been linked to the continent's colonial history, which in some ways continues to

influence postcolonial understanding of gender and the construction and African sexualities.

The consultation of texts from European explorers and missionaries revealed a pattern centered on ethnocentric and racist constructions of African sexualities (Tamale 2006; Mama 1996; Magubane, 2001). Amina Mama, one of the first African scholars to discuss African sexuality, suggested that Western fabrication and African silence on sexuality are connected to “a legacy of racist fascination with Africans and their sexuality” (Mama, 1996:39). Mama further observed that issues of sexuality in Africa are often conceptualized exclusively in terms of project donor-driven investigations and debates around illness and violence (HIV/AIDS, female genital cutting, rape, etc.). That pathologizing of African sexualities served to reproduce imperialism, racism, and the dehumanizing of Africans. Although African feminists—myself included—do not condone the negative aspects of female genital cutting in its multiple forms, we nonetheless reject the maternalistic tone Western feminists have adopted to talk about it, undermining African women’s agency in regards to this issue. African women have conducted research on female genital cutting, exploring the multifaceted dimensions of the practice, which they have tied to spirituality, social identity, and even sexual desire, moving away from the imperialist discourses that claim it is an expression of African savagery (see Shell-Duncan and Hernlund 2000; Ahmadu 2000; Dellenborg 2004; Diallo 2004). In The Gambia, scholars and activists like Isatou Touray—she founded The Gambia’s Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP)—along with Amie Bojang Sissoho, Vice President Isatou Njie-Saidy, and countless women and men have advocated for the banning of female

genital cutting. Their tireless work yielded legislation in 2016 that banned the practice and made it illegal.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic emerging in the 1980s provoked a panic that provided opportunities for racist Global North scholars to reproduce racist colonial narratives about African sexualities (see Caldwell et al 1989; Macdonald 1996; Deniaud et al 1991). To take one example, John Caldwell et al's 1989 piece on "African Sexuality" followed a line of argumentation reminiscent of the old scripts on African sexuality, which they contrasted with the "Eurasian model" of sexuality. The latter posited female chastity as a moral norm emblematic of civilization, as opposed to "African sexuality," which they depicted as characterized by "permissiveness", loose marital bonds, and no moral ban of the exchange of sex for money, concluding that in Africa having sex is as simple as eating and drinking (Caldwell et al. 1989:195). Some Africanist scholars, mostly women (Ahlberg 1994; Le Blanc et al. 1991; Heald 1995;), have responded to Caldwell et al.'s work, uncovering its weaknesses by arguing that their analyses were based on a Western framework of sexuality that was simply projected onto Africans, and which came with inherent biases. They remarked that Caldwell et al. completely silenced the role played by Christianity in the alteration of African sexual mores, while placing sexual responsibility on women because African men were simply not considered to be sexually responsible (Ahlberg 1994; Le Blanc et al. 1991; Heald 1995; Arnfred 2004). Though I whole-heartedly agree with these scholars' unquestionable critique of Caldwell and colleagues, I nonetheless find it necessary to discuss the issue of exchanging money (or material advantages) for sex, which their critique does not address.

While doing fieldwork, I observed that many young Gambian women were reluctant to talk about sex and sexualities with me. I did not interpret their reluctance to mean that they were not interested in the topic; they just wanted to be discrete about it because openly talking about sex and sexualities outside of marriage made them run the risk of being socially stigmatized. This led me to having to conduct more than two interviews with my female informants before they could finally open up and speak to me about sex and sexuality, having gained confidence that I had no interest in judging them or making public their private ‘business’. Though many of my female informants saw and treated me as a fellow Gambian sister, they also looked at me as a semester or semi-outsider who was open to talk about, and with whom it was safe to discuss, sex and sexualities without fear of being judged. Some of my female informants, when I brought about the issue of sex and sexuality, simply suck their teeth at me and said no with a straight face, asking why they should sit down and tell me their private business. Some others preferred to give me the run-around because they didn’t want to be impolite and say no to a sister.

Following the leading footsteps of Amina Mama and others, I intend to write about African sexualities in a way that is grounded on a holistic approach, in order to reach this dissertation’s objective: to shed light on Gambian women’s and men’s sexual labor in the context of tourism. Obviously, such a task required that I spent some time and energy deconstructing the numerous stereotypes found first in colonial discourse and which found their way in some scholarship on African sexualities.

The concept of “representation” has to do with how languages and other symbolic systems are necessarily used to explain the world around us in a meaningful way.

Meaning does not rest in a word or things by itself. It should rather be approached as the result of a “signifying practice” that produces and constructs, through the use of specific languages, the very way we perceive things, understand and conceptualize them, meaningfully (Hall 1997:24). Stuart Hall has revealed how crucial representations of marked racial difference have been for identifying the “Other”. As a particular kind of representation, stereotypes—based on race, class, gender and sexuality—work to produce meanings that justify the reproduction of hierarchies that determine the way people see and are seen, and treat and are treated. As many African scholars (Tamale 2011; Arnfred 2009; Halle-Valle 2004; Magubane 2001; Mama 1996) have noted, one cannot conduct research on sexualities in Africa without first comprehending the depth of colonialism and the impact of its representations. The violence of racialization is found at the core of European colonialism in Africa: Africans were often downgraded, and naturalized, to be the direct ‘black’ opposite to European ‘whiteness’ (Fanon 1952; Ratele 1998). That construction of blackness was a prime illustration of colonial violence. Homi K. Bhabha aptly puts it this way: “(the) black is both savage and obedient; he embodies rampant sexuality and yet possess childlike innocence; he is mystical, primitive, simple minded and yet a master manipulator of social forces” (Bhabha 1994:67). Skin color is not the only sign used to theorize African savagery, sexuality has been of great use as well: “For the majority of white men the Negro represents the sexual instinct (that is raw in its state)” (Fanon 1952/1986:1776).

Black women were ascribed as lascivious sexual objects ready to satisfy white men’s sexual fantasies. The European fascination with blackness and the black African woman’s body has often been summarized in the treatment suffered by Sartje Baartman,

otherwise known as the Hottentot or black Venus. She was exhibited in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe in freak shows for the size of her vaginal *labia minora*—also called “vaginal apron”—and for the protuberance of her buttocks. French medical doctors compared her body parts with similar body parts of European prostitutes before reaching the conclusion that these phenotypic characteristics were the unambiguous sign of hypersexuality, according to Gilman (1985). For Gilman, Baartman came to “illustrate” the racial and sexual alterity of the black female body (Gilman 1985; Haraway 1989). This imagined hypersexuality of black African women (and by extension of all black women in continental Africa or in the diaspora) can be seen performed in popular culture (the hip hop music videos) and pornography. As Mireille Miller-Young (2014)—a feminist porn studies scholar—has noted, the porn industry engages in racial fetishism of black women, “a voyeurism that looks but also does not look, that obsessively enjoys, lingers over, and takes pleasure in the black female body even while it declares that body as strange, Other, and abject” (Miller-Young 2014:9). Global North’s pornography provides a lot of information about Euro-American imaginaries of black female sexuality. There is no doubt that these imaginaries are carried over by male Global North sex tourists as they arrive in The Gambia. I know of some young Gambian women who were—unbeknownst to them—videotaped while having sex with two older European tourists in The Gambia. Upon viewing the video, my first reaction was to wonder how financially desperate she must have been to accept the interaction with these two tourists! The video, along with many others filmed in The Gambia—was on sale for a while on the black market. Such circulation of video images sometimes force these young women to emigrate to neighboring countries, overwhelmed by shame.

Black African males' bodies also come marked as exotic and strange, violent, uneducated and hypersexual (Fanon 1970; Mercer 1994). The Mandingo has certainly been the stereotypical representation of the black African man in the Global North, a male version of the Hottentot Venus<sup>8</sup>. The Mandingo is made to possess a "gigantic" black penis, almost "abnormal", which is a source of fascination, desire, and rejection: it "explains" his hypersexuality and his violence (West 1993; Mercer 1999; Jackson 1999 and 2006; Poulson-Bryant 2005). As Scott Poulson-Bryant (2005) highlighted in his book *Hung: A Meditation on The Measure of Black Men in America*, black men are expected in both mainstream culture and pornographic industry to be "hung like a horse, not quite human, with irrepressible sexual urges, the center of black male appeal is embedded in the phallic (Poulson-Bryant 2005:9&142). As Franz Fanon argued (1970), the myth of the aggressive, violent, animalistic natural sexuality is an invention and fabrication by powerful white masters to alleviate their fears, while at the same time justifying their anti-black brutality, which dissipated their guilt. Black men have been given a sexual script that reduces them to the size of their supposedly large penises, which give them an animalistic sexual prowess. In *Welcome to the Jungle*, Kobena Mercer (1994), when dealing with gay culture in the UK, argued that in post-imperial Britain black gay men have also been implicated in the same landscape of stereotypes as African men have been. That landscape was first arranged during colonial times and still continues to dominate the language that constructs white gay males' needs, desires, and demands (1994:133). As Mercer analytically engages with Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of

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<sup>8</sup> Run the entry "Mandingo" on Amazon.com and enjoy the numerous films and books that reproduce that stereotype.

black men's bodies (1983), he asserts the conventionality of the racial and pornographic stereotypes used in Mapplethorpe's "art photography" that does nothing but highlight the survival of the colonial fantasy behind white fear and fascinations with the "monstrous" phallus of the black man (1994:134). Black men's savagery is explained by their hypersexuality, in a thread that envelops complex dialectics of power and subordination (Mercer 1994:133-137).

Sexual imaginaries also apply to certain African ethnic groups and their ways of life more than others (Frolick 2010). A great deal of scholarship on Africa has outlined images of the Maasai warriors of East Africa, or the Mandingo warriors from West Africa. Ann Laura Stoler and Sander Gilman have demonstrated how useful for colonialists and missionaries references to "African sexuality" have been to construct Africans as primitives, uncontrolled, excessive, and degenerates, in opposition to the measured and controlled sexuality—and civilization—of the colonizer. Indeed, sexuality was a central trope in the determination of who was civilized and who was not (see, Gilman 1985; McClintock 1995 and Stoler 1997). This is the baggage that black peoples carry around as they go about their lives, as a cultural legacy of slavery, colonization, and imperialism (Bhabba 1983; Mercer 1994). It is one of my premises that these stereotypes and narratives are embedded—although perhaps differently—in the consciousness of both Gambians and Global north tourists alike, in their performances of self within the Gambian tourism sexual economy, and particularly in the tourists' imaginaries.

The recently theorized concept of "tourism imaginaries" by tourism studies scholars Noel B. Salazar and Nelson H.H. Graburn is useful here, and defined as "socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with peoples' personal

imaginings that are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices” (Salazar 2012:1). This concept is grounded, as I see it, in the work of Franz Fanon, has been analytically useful for my work. In the expression “tourism imaginaries,” imaginaries are schemas of interpretation structured by dichotomies that put the world in paradigmatic oppositions: nature-culture, here-there, male-female, inside-outside, and local-global, black-white (Salazar, 2012:1). Imaginaries are systems of presumption that circulate globally and are widely shared. Prasad (2003) identifies recurring myths in tourism about the Global South: the myths of the authentic unchanged, unrestrained, and uncivilized. These imaginaries rely on Orientalism, colonialism, imperialism, and racism. They are grounded on romantic nostalgia, as found in photographs, travelogues, blogs, websites, guidebooks, tourism brochures, coffee-table books, magazines, news coverage, and advertising.

Much tourism advertising produced by both host nations and tourism companies rely on the use of sexual imagery and mythology of black and brown bodies as sexualized subjects to attract visitors (Oppermann et al. 1998; Green 2007; Patil 2011). Indeed, images of brown and black men and women as wild, hot, and oversexed, waiting to be consumed, has attracted Global North travelers (O’Connell Davidson and Sanchez Taylor 1999; Nyanzi et al 1998). Local men and women who seek to engage in tourism’s sexual economies may take advantage of stereotypes imposed upon them to engage in sexual relations with tourists by tapping into the notions of hot and hypersexual black men and women.

Mark Padilla writes about a “marketable fantasy” (2007) in his work on male sex work in the Dominican Republic, where male sex workers have been performing a

particular kind of “authentic Dominican male sexuality” in ways that maximize their desirability to tourists. In the Gambia, men usually adopt a notion of the “authentic African male capable of great sexual prowess” that can go on all night with their big “black mamba”<sup>9</sup>. They sometimes take on a Rastafarian identity, which shows them to be calm, cool, accepting of differences, and non-threatening individuals with whom one could smoke ganja and have great sex: they are animated by the “one love” vibe, which stems from notions of free love of humanity and acceptance of all people regardless of color, and remain open to interracial romance.

Gambian men and women also hold stereotypes about Global North tourists (Frohlick 2008; Nyanzi et al 1998). They often imagine these tourists to have great wealth that could potentially aid them economically and socially. In fact many Global North tourists who come to The Gambia may only have limited financial wealth, as they are often members of the working class or lower middle class in their country of origin. In fact, some tourists might take advantage of these stereotypes held by Gambians to get more out of the actual sexual interactions, particularly in times of Gambian economic depression. As revealed in Nyanzi et al (1992), some of the Gambians interviewed imagined the West as plundered in wealth, “a dream destination flowing with milk and honey” (1992:566). Other Gambians I spoke to generally see whiteness as synonymous with wealth: “toubabs have money, they come from a place with lots of wealth that is much richer than our country” (2010).

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<sup>9</sup> “Black Mamba” is a term used by white global north tourists to describe black males’ penises.

## **Gender, Kinship, and Marriage Relations in The Gambia**

To understand the gender and social scripts that Gambians carry about and use in their involvement in tourism sexual economies, we must pay attention to some relevant aspects of Gambian social practices: gender, kinship, and marriage relations. In The Gambia, family structure remains the most important social cement. Gambians' religious and traditional beliefs set-up rules for family, marriage, gender roles, and inter-generational interactions (cultural scripts).

Gender roles in the Senegambia are heavily shaped by Islam and Shari'a law, where the *cadi* is responsible for adjudicating areas such as inheritance, divorce, marriage, and sexual rights: decisions are based on traditions, the Qur'an, and the Haddith (Saine 2012:122-123). The Gambia is a deeply patriarchal society, where women are generally treated as second-class citizens, in that they do not enjoy social, political, and economic equality with their male counterparts. Most men and women have taken for granted their gender-specific scripts and expectations without questioning them. Girls are socialized into their subordinate roles in various aspects of society. Sentences such as, "men have more knowledge and strength, that is why they should lead us," can be heard from men and women alike. It is also often said that "a woman will enter paradise depending on how happy she has made her husband and how well she has followed his lead" (Saine 2012:109). Popular sayings also say that a woman's children will prosper and do well in life the more she suffers and accepts her suffering in marriage. This being said, we must be mindful of the work of African feminists such as Ifi Amadiume (1997) and Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997), who have aptly shown that talking of "female subordination" in Africa is often done too simplistically: they point to

different ways gender is conceived in different sociocultural contexts (Oyewumi 1997). African feminists like Ife Amadiume and Oyeronke Oyewumi fundamentally see motherhood as being pivotal in African cultures, in which they center their analysis on the wife/mother distinction (Oyewumi 2000) and “the motherhood paradigm” (Amadiume 1997). For Oyewumi, female subordination is embedded in the position of a “wife”, whereas the position of a mother is a position of power in African contexts; this makes motherhood the preferred identity of African women (Oyewumi 2000:1096). She concludes that “Western feminist theory runs off track, because the women in Western feminist theory is a wife—i.e. subordinated to a man/husband”(Oyewumi 2000:1094). Oyewumi explains that the subordination of the ‘wife’ has nothing to do with gender but rather it has to do with the fact that in patrilineal settings, the ‘wife’ holds a position of an outsider to the lineage (Oyewumi 2002:1094), and the inverse is true for in-married husbands in a matrilineal settings (Arnfred 2001).

While I appreciate these scholars’ attempt to introduce relativism when considering African gender relations, I cannot distance myself from the fact that, in general, men are considered to be the “natural” heads of household in most African settings. This of course should not preclude us from seeing and highlighting the many ways women exercise power in both private and public spheres. In some educated middle class Gambian households, decisions are made with inputs from both parents, particularly in today’s difficult economic conditions, which have left many women as de facto heads of their households and many raise their families as single mothers. Many of the women who were my informants for this project and whom I foreground in chapter 3 are impoverished single mothers who were left with the responsibility of raising their

children by themselves without the help of a husband/male partner who might have “temporarily” migrated to find work elsewhere in West Africa, or – in the worst cases – left for the backway. Older women in Gambian society may yield power, for they are able to affect the decision-making processes of their sons and daughters through the family networks they participate in, and which regulate the everyday affairs of a household’s compound. Their voices are also heard as they intervene in the social life of their communities for the sake of peace and tranquility. It would be unthinkable and unacceptable—despite Gambian society’s patriarchal character—for a young man or an adult male to disrespect or mistreat an elderly woman. Although Gambian women must routinely face a patriarchal societal structure, many have taken incremental steps to improve their conditions. There is, for example, a growing presence of educated women in positions of responsibility in the various organs of government. Girls have been receiving fewer education years than boys (Saine 2012). Recently, the gender difference in education has tended to decrease, particularly in urban areas where traditional gender relations are more difficult to maintain, in combination with Yaya Jammeh’s policy to make education free for girls. Some women are educated abroad. The University of The Gambia (UTG) was founded in 1999. More and more young women enroll. Women are also particularly involved in female-headed clubs; they run vegetable gardens cultivated collectively, and the crops produced are sold, bringing additional income. They exercise authority in a context without men. Many women own relatively small commercial businesses, which motivates them to travel to buy and sell their merchandise. As an African feminist, I believe in the importance of deconstructing the cultural challenges that hinder women’s progress. I appreciate the ways women on the ground are working

to contest and challenge these cultural impediments. Women in The Gambia are not passive subjects. They are constantly active in creating ways to improve their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

One particular way family is important in The Gambia is certainly its providing a path to one's ancestors. Family gives one her social origins and basic identity. One's last name provides information about kinship ties, point of ancestral origins, and social standing. Family structures in The Gambia are both nuclear and extended, where bilateral kin (mother, father, children) sometimes share their compound with one or more of the following: grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. More often than not, as a result of the increase in the number of single mother-headed households, a de-facto matrifocality emerges (Kempadoo 2004, Saine 2012). This is how the members of the "extended family" also found in the compound of a bilateral kindred are often relatives of the mother more so than the father. These households live in a compound: a relatively large house or houses bound together by their inclusion in a space surrounded by a wall-fence that often hides the activities taking place in and directly around the house(s) from public view. Compounds are also found in urban areas. Descent is mostly traced through a patrilineal line. That is why children get their father's last name and ethnic identities, although in pre-Islamic Gambia, according to Abdoulaye Saine (2012), the Wolof, Serer, Fula, and Lebou all practiced matrilineal kinship system (Saine 2012: 111). Today, inheritance comes from one's father, though women usually get less inheritance rights than their male siblings. Family gives one a safety net to receive support from throughout one's life (marriage, births, and death). Muslim Gambian households are polygamous; men are allowed to have up to four wives. A man's prestige and wealth is thought to be

related to how well he keeps his family. In The Gambia, men are expected to be the breadwinners for their families.

Men's social respect is largely contingent on their abilities to provide for their natal as well as their conjugal kin. Before the holding of a wedding, men are expected to provide bridewealth and gifts to their bride-to-be called (in wolof *may bu njeka* or "the first gift"). The contents of the gifts are negotiated between the two families. Many in the Global North approach bridewealth as the sale of bride to the groom's family. For most Africans, and Gambians in this case, the gifts seal a social contract between two families, where the groom family is compensating for the labor that the bride would have brought to—ideally—the compound of her father. Bridewealth also legitimizes one's marriage in the eyes of the community, while establishing recognized rights of children to inherit from their father. It boosts the confidence of the bride in her social worth, which dictates her standing in her new family and her community at large. Though Christian marriages do not require bridewealth, they expect an exchange of gifts during the ceremony organized around the engagement. In those instances where a Christian man marries a Muslim wife, he must provide a bridewealth.

The downside of the bridewealth system is that at times it involves a high monetary cost that sometimes delays marriages, or prevents them from happening altogether. Usually, once negotiations are completed, marriages are performed at the mosque for Muslims and the church for Christians. In a Muslim context, brides and grooms are not required to be physically present for a marriage to take place. This is not so for the Christians, where both brides and grooms must attend. Polygamy is widely accepted among Muslims but not so—at least at the normative level—among Christians.

However, in Gambian Christian families, men at times also engage in extra-marital affairs, and might end up having children or additional families outside their marriages. For both Muslims and Christians, adulterous married women are considered to have committed a very grave offense, and discovery could lead to immediate divorce, severe censorship, and public humiliation. In general, individuals choose their marriage partners. However, arranged marriages do happen also, especially in rural areas. Marriage celebrations can be very elaborate and costly, that is why sometimes, a small formal marriage ceremony is held while the wedding celebration is kept for a later date in order to give more time to prepare financially and socially. In general, divorces are discouraged. If there are disputes in a marriage, elders often step in to counsel the couple in order to end the dispute; however, in these discussions, women are always encouraged to obey and listen to their husband. In cases of serious abuses, a women can ask for a divorce by returning the bride wealth/gifts to her husband or leaving her marriage compound and returning to her father's family compound/house.

All family members are expected to contribute to the household's life: this is the way affect and intimacy are shared. This comes with the expectation that children are taken care of by parents, relatives and other adults living with them, and in return they, too, must take care of their parents, relatives and other adults in their old age. Social relationships are generally organized and understood as a set of giving and receiving situations. If someone does something good for you, you are expected to return the favor. In both Senegal and The Gambia, there exists the concept of *teranga*—a wolof word meaning hospitality, the willingness to be hospitable to family members, friends, strangers, and community at large, by providing food, drinks, money, gifts or helping

with daily chores. Social relationships are very important to all ethnic groups, as they provide the space for the performance of *teranga*. Even in hard economic times, Gambians are willing to share food with their neighbors, friends and family members, no matter how small the meal is. It would be unthinkable for a family member or friend to not offer or give *teranga* to one's kin group, friends, and neighbors, especially if you can afford it. It is rather normal for a stranger to show up at a compound and ask to be given water or a meal and seeing that their wishes are granted by the people living in the compound. In Gambian contexts, friendship is very important, for it allows Gambians to form communities outside the confines of the family. A saying in Wolof, *nik, nik tye garaapamp*—meaning “people are each others' medicine”—summarizes well the importance of friendship bonds: friends are expected to be there during weddings, births, and deaths in ways that family members may not be able to. Friends, particularly long time ones, can be seen or understood as part of one's own extended family. The general expectation is that the social actors in these friendships are there to provide social, affective and economic support when needed, and are based on reciprocity and exchange. This carries over to intimate friendships in that the able “friend” (i.e., lover) is expected to provide affection and economic support. This notion of “friendship” is related to what Simon and Gagnon refer to as “interpersonal scripts.” Collectivism and interdependency are very much favored in Gambian culture. In further chapters I argue that “friendship” as a Gambian social script, has proven to be very useful to both Gambians and Global North tourists as it provides the idiom to describe what they do with each other in a socioculturally acceptable way for both. “Friendship” gives cover to sex work as it allows for it not to be named, while also invisibilizing tourists' demand for sexual labor.

In the predominantly Muslim society, believing in one God functioned as a unifying force that, in a sense, de-ethnicized society, where ethnic groups unite in their daily practices. However, it should not be inferred that Gambian culture is nothing but a slight variation of Arab culture. Gambians are Sunni Muslims, often practicing Sufi Islam and belonging to different religious sects (Tijan, Muride, Bifal), whose leaderships are mostly emanating from Senegal. However, these sects are united under the five basic tenets of Islam: *Ishada*, declaration of belief in Allah and Muhammad as his messenger; performance of the five daily prayers; *Zakat*, giving charity to the needy; fasting during the month of Ramadan; and, if financially able, performing a pilgrimage to Mecca (Saine 2012:51). Many youths are enrolled in *qu'ranic* schools called *darra* at the age of five as part of their religious teaching before receiving their Western education at the age of eight. Generally, most young people, through the course of their schooling, will get both Islamic and Western educational instruction; some may only receive *qu'ranic* education and continue on that path to become Islamic scholars. These individuals often end up going to the Middle East to further their education or enroll in the now many Islamic schools opened by Wahhabi Muslims from Saudi Arabia, who often endorse Shari'a in person or online. In those cases, these Islamic scholars/practitioners become very orthodox and generally advocate for a return to a more purist teaching of Islam, which always reinforces patriarchy.

The Gambia's Islamic tradition is also very much shaped by "radical" Islamist ideology coming from Senegal. This is in part attributable to successful radio and television programming that savvy Senegalese Imams and their disciples or *talibes* produce. These Imams with large followings hold televised programs of their annual

*Gammo*—an all night prayer/celebration of the birth and life of Prophet Muhammad. They also organize religious conferences that give them the opportunity to give sermons and disseminate “radical” political ideology and teachings of Islam that both reject Arabism and at the same time assert an Africa-centered revivalist brand of Islam that celebrates West African pride and black identity. The influence of Wahhabism and revivalist Islamic movements from Senegal has led to an increase of veil wearing among young Gambian women and schoolgirls, which was in the past generally limited to older women. Though Islamic understanding and teaching in The Gambia has historically been soft and relaxed, Gambians are used to praying and attending Friday prayers called *Juma* and adhering to the basic tenants of Islam without holding extremist views.

When in power, Jammeh made alliances with Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He sought to merge religion and politics in ways that served his interests. Indeed, one characteristic of Jammeh was that he could be seen carrying anywhere he went a qu’ran while invoking Allah’s name in ways Gambians had never seen their politicians do before. Islamic religion became part of Jammeh’s propaganda machine. He asserted that “Allah’s will put him in office.” In 2015, Jammeh declared The Gambia to be an Islamic State, a declaration that was met with skepticism by most Gambians who took it as a joke, while the few conservative Islamists welcomed the idea. Some who opposed that move by Jammeh evoked the invisibilization of Christians to justify their opposition. Although Islam has shaped Gambians’ religious beliefs, values, attitudes, language and scholarship, it never was a dividing force. For the most part, Gambians enjoy living in a secular country that values religious tolerance and secularism. Though Shari’a courts exist to adjudicate marriage

disputes, inheritance and custody issues amongst Muslims via the *cadi* at the village and district levels, it is not used in national courts. And this is not expected to change any time soon.

The Gambia's cultural practices, similar to Senegal's, constitute a mosaic of Islamic, Christian, and traditional practices. Sexuality and sexual practices are very much informed by socio-cultural and religious understandings. While both Islam and Christianity identify marriage as the appropriate context for the expression of sexual feelings, these two religions differ in their valuation of sexual acts and pleasure. Islam sees and promotes sexuality as an enriching and enjoyable activity in itself that is not obligatorily limited to procreation. Christianity, on the other hand, sees sexual desire as a sin (see the Catholics' Original Sin) and consider the desire of the flesh to possibly leading to a threat to the spiritual order. In The Gambia, socio-cultural and religious norms inform the ideal of having women reach marriage as virgins. Marriage provides a space for sexuality to unfold. This means that sex is limited to the institution of marriage, and should occur between a wife and a husband. Any sexual act taking place outside the institution of a marriage is considered *haram* or sinful.

While it could be argued that the necessity to reach marriage with virginity is formulated in gender-neutral terms, in The Gambia, however, that rule has different meanings for men and women (Chant 2005; Nyanzi 2010; van Eerdewijk 2009). Girls learn very early on to protect their virginity. That is a requirement that is always present in their minds, leaving them very little room to articulate their sexuality in a way that doesn't stigmatize them as loose, prostitute, bad, easy girls or women. The safest strategy to adopt in this regard is to remain silent about one's sexuality. A woman's

entry into a marriage as an unambiguous virgin allows her to demand good and fair treatment from her husband and in-laws. While less practiced today, many Gambian brides have had to show that they are virgins after their first night with their new husbands. When a wedding takes place, the bride (*jabarr*) goes through a ritual called *murr*, a wolof term for covering, a moment in which, the new bride is covered and taken by her female relatives, usually her patrilineal aunts, to her husband's house for the consummation of the marriage. The morning after, these female relatives enter her bedroom to check for bloodstains on the sheets. Once detected, a public announcement is made that she was found to be virgin. This provides her female relatives the opportunity to celebrate her honor and take pride in the great upbringing she received. The celebration comes with drumming and gwels/griots singing songs rapping of praise for maintaining her honor, called *tasso*.

Once married, women are allowed to have and engage in open and public discussions about sex and sexuality without being censored or feeling ashamed. They often do so while talking about how to best please their husbands. Older married female (*jabarr*) relatives and friends provide the newly wed woman with advice and material cultures such as love beads called *jaljalee* in Wolof or incense to burn during the night to entice her husband. This is the moment when a girl<sup>10</sup> enters into adulthood. The fact that the expression of sex and sexuality is deemed appropriate for discussion openly by and for married women, leaves many unmarried Gambian girls/women to remain silent about sex and sexuality because to do so implicates one as having sex outside of marriage. This

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<sup>10</sup> In The Gambia, a common name for unmarried females is *jenha* in wolof or girl(s) in English.

leaves many girls and women to engage in secretive sexual liaisons until getting pregnant. For women, virginity until marriage is very important in both Islamic and Christian families, for it shows how well she was raised, how much respect she had for her parents, and how much respect from society she will enjoy, along with the level of agency she will likely exercise in her marriage. (Saine 2012; Chant 2005; Nyanzi 2010; van Eerdewijk 2009)

Boys and men are encouraged not to be silent about their sexual experiences or prowess; to the contrary, they freely report about it with pride because it helps them assert their manhood. As a society where polygamy is widely practiced, men are allowed and sometimes encouraged to have more than one wife. This gives men an advantage in choosing their mates and fully expressing their own desires. Being a man in The Gambia, in fact, as is the case elsewhere, is not simply a matter of biology, it is also a matter of gender performance: having a penis and using it for heterosexual sex and serving as a provider to one's household. During my fieldwork, many of the men interviewed were willing to talk about sex and sexuality more openly, as opposed to women who were very reluctant to give details about their sexual practices and encounters with their toubab "friends." Guys spoke freely and at times boasted and expressed that they were having sex with a toubab almost every day, sometimes even three times a day, or all night long. They explained that they often were embarrassed with their neighbors because their female tourists would make such loud noises while having sex. My informant Lamin once explained that one day a neighbor called him privately and asked him to keep things down because there were children living in the compound, which led Lamin to ask his European toubab friend to not moan and groan: "I even

covered her mouth sometimes.” Here, Lamin is evoking a Gambian masculine script that speaks to his virility as a man, where he is able to use his penis well, as a man. He affirms that he may be hypersexually masculine when needed. Overall, the prevailing sexual socialization of men and women has the lofty goal of promoting collective well-being by strengthening social identity and cohesion in a heteronormative fashion that negates the existence of non-normative sexualities.

Prior to the 1990s, same-sex relations were understood by many Africans to be non-existent in Africa, while some scholars were silent on the issue (see the work of Ajen 1998; Murray and Roscoe 1998; Epprecht 2006;). Many were under the opinion that same-sex sexuality was foreign and imposed upon Africa by European colonizers. Two African heads of state became notorious for their homophobic remarks and became the symbol of African homophobia. Zimbabwe’s president Robert Mugabe and the then Kenyan president Danial Arap Moi expressed that “homo-sexuality is un-African,” that the act is immoral and repulsive, because it offends both the law of nature and religious beliefs. Moi further added that “words like lesbianism and homosexuality do not exist in African languages” (quoted in Dunton and Palmberg 1996:9, and 1996:24). Yaya Jammeh also joined in this homophobic wave by signing a decree that made homosexuality illegal in The Gambia, which brought about worldwide condemnation, particularly when he said that he would “cut off the heads of gays if they are ever found” (Saine 2012:128; Epprecht 2013:97). Sadly, Jammeh’s views are very much in line with the position of The Islamic Council of The Gambia and of the Christian Churches. The positions of Gambian Christian Churches seem to be repeating the theses of Global North evangelism, mainly from “born-again” Christians (Evangelicals) from the United States.

The evidence of same-sex practices in Africa is overwhelming and varied (Amadiume 1987; Murray and Roscoe 1998; Epprecht 2006 and 2008; Dlamini 2006; Hoad 2006; Gaudio 1998; Kendall 1999). Murray and Roscoe showcase collected data and material from anthropologists and travel writers that go back in time as far as 1732 to reveal that the Islamic social code does not require one to suppress same-sex desire or behavior, so long as it does not interfere with their ability to procreate (Murray and Roscoe 1998:273, Epprecht 2013). Dunbar Moodie's work (2001) also highlights evidence of the practice of "thigh-sex" in South Africa between men and boys, and young men and women before marriage. Moodie writes about the all-male life in the gold mines of the Rand, where young men were herdboys prior to entering the mines. These young herdmen would practice "thigh-sex" with girls. Thigh-sex was also reported between older and younger men in the mines. Aside from having sex, these young lovers would perform domestic duties, for which they were remunerated by their older male lovers. Hence, according to Moodie, "men became wives in the mines in order to become husbands and full men" (Moodie 2001:305).

Female same-sex relations are also highlighted in the works of Kendall (1999), who wrote about a practice in Lesotho where intimate relationships called "*mpho*-relationships" between married women occur with some frequency. These relationships were not considered to be threatening or conceived as sexual, since no penis was involved. These women's husbands, according to Kendall, would often know about the *mpho*-relationship. The wife's female lover would at times have a status as a family friend. Henriette Gunkel's work on female same-sex intimacy in Johannesburg (the

“mummy-baby” relationships) (2010), provoked a re-thinking of female same-sex intimacy outside the institution of marriage and identity politics.

In The Gambia, the fact that same-sex relations were made illegal in 1995 makes it very difficult for people to engage in such practices openly. However, this doesn't mean that same-sex behavior was not taking place. In The Gambia, it is perfectly normal for two men to hold hands or wrap their arms around each other in public as a normal expression of male affection for one another. No one would get alarmed to see two men sharing a bed. These acceptable displays of affection among men often provided cover for young boys and men to engage in same-sex relations. As noted in Nii Ajen's work, in West Africa many same-sex activities “occur under the umbrella of ‘friendship’” (Ajen 1998:136). Hence, it appears that it isn't that same-sex relations are not happening in Africa or The Gambia. Rather, many Africans are simply rejecting identity politics that underpin Western notions of sexuality, especially same-sex behaviors that run the risk of having them criminalized and/or putting their lives at risk.

Since homosexuality had been made illegal and carried a heavy prison sentence during Jammeh's regime, and since it had been made sinful by socio-religious teachings, many sexually fluid men and women hid their sexualities by mostly engaging in heterosexual relationships openly. It is safe to say that most Gambian gays are closeted. Most Gambians do not think or believe that homosexuality exists in their country, and if they concede its existence, they often fault the Europeans (toubabs) for importing the practice. My attempt in this dissertation is to assert that same-sex behavior naturally exists in the country, mostly between Gambians than between Gambians and toubabs,

and as such the lived experiences of men who have sex with men must be included as a matter of fact into the Gambian sexscape.

Many scholars have pointed that due to social and economic changes in many urban and semi-urban area of Africa—and The Gambia is no exception—young people have been delaying their entry into adulthood, which is traditionally linked to marriage. Women were increasingly putting off marriage and choosing to engage in pre-marital sexual relations on their own terms, albeit only partially, in order to remain independent (see Helle-Vallee and Haram 2004; Chant and Evans 2010; Cole 2009; Saine 2012). This socio-economic point of departure came with women and men having informal sexual relationships with partners able to provide them with economic gifts. Unlike what is going on in the Global North, where “romantic love” or personal pleasure “are the ‘proper’ motives for engaging in sex, and that strategic and materially oriented uses of sexuality are strictly tabooed” (Helle-Valle, 2004:205), sexual mores in much of Africa included matter-of-fact notions of reciprocity and acknowledgement of sex by gifts or money. Women living in urban or semi-urban areas were opting out of kinship-based circumscription by choosing not to marry in order to pursue self-fulfillment and independence: “they choose well-settled, generous, married men, so-called ‘sugar daddies’ rather than young and penniless ones” (Haram 2004:222; see also Chant & Evans 2010). According to Haram, this allowed women to “maintain some degree of social independence and avoid the potential control exercised by a husband” (Haram 2004: 223). What is missing from this body of literature however is that many young men were also pursuing similar options. Young women and men are now seeking relationships with older partners that could provide them with both economic and material support.

## **Formation of the Gambian Sexscape**

Scholars have discussed the concept of “transactional sex” to highlight the centrality of material exchanges in everyday sexual relations without conflating these varied forms of intimacy with “prostitution” because it carries with it stigmatization and moralizing tones ( Cole 2004; Hunter 2002; Padilla 2009; Cabezas ; Kempadoo ). Jennifer Cole described the Malagasy concept called *fitiavina*—which means “love,” where affect and exchange are intertwined rather than opposed. These non-marital sexual relationships have been referred to with the expression “transactional sex” (Bledsoe 1990; Castle and Konate 1999). Transactional sex is generally defined as the exchange of gifts and/or money for sex; it is opposed to “commercial sex” and “prostitution,” which comes with a set price agreed upon by a sex worker and his/her client (Luke 2003; Hunter 2002). “Prostitution” and or “commercial sex” are terms commonly used to underscore a sexual exchange that involves a pre-determined contract paid in cash to a person—in most cases a woman—who provides sex on a professional basis (de Zalduondo 1991). In cases where things have not been as straightforward or non-professionalized, the term “survival sex” has also been used to highlight sexual service as consequence of women’s poverty and economic dependence on men (Muir 1991). In the 1990s, the term “transactional sex” came into fashion in sexuality studies to describe non-commercial sexual exchange practices in many Sub-Saharan African countries (for the Gambia, see Chant & Evans 2010; Senegal, see Niang 1995; for Ghana, see Ankomah 1992, and Fayorsey 1996; for South Africa, see Hunter 2002; Wojcicki 2001 and 2002). Studies in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Cameroon, found that young women engaged in transactional sex to pay for their educational expenses and gain social networks. Others suggest that peer pressure to

obtain goods associated with modernity (cellphones, expensive clothing, jewelry, etc.) push young women to engage in transactional sex (Bledsoe 1990; Ankomah 1998; Temin et al. 1999; Nyanzi et al. 2001). Adverse economic conditions and implicit parental pressure are cited for pushing young women towards transactional sexual relations (Bledsoe 1990; Ankomah 1998; Nyanzi et al. 2001 Longfield et al. 2002). Nancy Luke (2003) suggested that there were wider occurrences of transactional sexual relationships by young women to satisfy desires of status and gifts than for securing basic subsistence. Out of these large bodies of scholarship, only a few scholars highlighted young men's engagement in transactional sexual relationships (see Barker and Rich 1992; Meekers and Calves 1997; Nyanzi et al 2001). In the context of socio-economic changes and globalization, the transactional sex as described above and which most specifically referred to sexual exchanges among Africans provided the basis for the development of inter-racial transactional sex between Africans and white foreigners/tourists.

Many young Gambians today, both men and women, seek relationships with older partners who can provide them with material security, be they Gambians residing in the country, semesters, or white Global North tourists. The lack of employment opportunities pushed many Gambians to seek alternative means to get an income by engaging in “transactional sex” with fellow Gambians, or what I call “strategic sex,” with global north tourists. I prefer “strategic sex” as opposed to “transactional sex,” for the latter has been mostly used to refer to young African women's engagement in short- to long-term heterosexual relations with mostly older African men. From a Foucauldian standpoint, I assert that sex—and here mostly inter-racial sex—is an instrument or strategy used by most of my Gambian informants to get closer to what they want, consolidating

“friendships” to gain access to gifts and support from white global north tourists. In The Gambia, both men and women get involved in sexual relations with Global North tourists, who are certainly seen as potential “sugar daddies or sugar mummies”, and who could perhaps provide them with multiple opportunities. In not wanting to fall into the usual stigmatization of actors<sup>11</sup> who engage in these kinds of sexual transactions, I am wary of calling these Gambians “prostitute” or “hustler.” Instead, I want to explain and highlight the different segments of the Gambian ‘sexscape’ with respect for their complexities. I now turn to the socio-sexual scripts I have identified the existence of in what I call the Gambian sexscape.

#### Cross-Generational Sexual Relations in The Gambia: the Sugar Daddies-Honey Babies and *Jigeg*-toyboy Relationships

There exists a large body of literature on cross-generational sexual liaisons in sub-Saharan Africa. It uncovers relationships between mostly young women and their older well-to-do male lovers (see Ankomah 1992; Castle and Konate 1999; Niang 1995; Hunter 2002; Leclerc-Madlala 2001 and 2003; Luke 2005). They are characterized as sugar daddy-boney-baby relationships, where both partners engage in what is referred to as transactional sex. The common understanding in the Sugar Daddy-honey-baby relationships is that an implicit exchange of sexual favors will be given by the honey-babies in return for the sugar daddies’ provision of monetary donations or material gifts to the honey-babies (Hunter 2002; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2005). The existing literature usually follows two lines of argumentation: 1) women’s economic

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<sup>11</sup> Some sex work scholars and activists—particularly those who are current or former sex workers themselves—are re-appropriating these terms, in order to defuse and re-signify their stigmatizing effects.

disempowerment and poverty is what pushes them to engage in “survival sex” (Bledsoe 1990; Ankomah 1998; Nyanzi et al. 2001; Longfield et al. 2002); and 2) the young women seek and maintain these relationships for not only subsistence reasons but also to allow for their ambitions for material wealth or consumption (see Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Hunter 2002; Luke 2003). The mostly young women involved are in need of means to pay for their own or their siblings’ education, take care of their household, obtain luxury goods (cellphones, clothing), a place to live, and a chance to live a trendy lifestyle in the face of changing economic and social realities.

In The Gambia, sugar daddies- honey-babies relationships are rampant. The men involved are older well-to do Gambians or Lebanese businessmen, government officials, or religious leaders who are already married—sometimes to more than one women. They generally enjoy social standing in their communities. The typical honey-babies are usually young women in their early twenties, who may be in their last years of high school or already in university. Some may have a job as waitress, cashier, secretary or bank teller. Others are completely jobless. My interviews with these girls show that these older men want to sleep with young women because they can’t resist the idea of accessing younger bodies, and because they “don’t get it from their wives.” They are hungry for sex and affect. The younger women are willing to give them what they want to get financial support. Binta, a 22 year-old self-identified honey-baby once told me:

Hey, these old men are foolish. They could be my father. They chase you around and offer you nice things and give you sweet words because they want to get into your underwear. I know that they don’t want to marry me because they already

have a wife or wives at home, so I get what I can from them” (Interview December 2016).

This sentiment was shared by all twelve honey-babies I interviewed. They were generally realistic about what to expect from these relationships. When asked about the sort of gifts they have gotten out of these relationships, they told me that they received allowances from their sugar daddies, the generous ones gave up to two thousand dalasies (roughly \$44.00) per month; others rented the honey-baby a place to live and buy her groceries weekly; paid for school fees; started a business for her; took her on vacation in Senegal, London or Dubai; bought jewelry and garments, computers, latest models of phones (iPhone or Samsung), a car or a land parcel; and finally any and everything the young woman desires, and which is within the reach of the sugar daddy’s financial standing. The sexual exchanges in these relationships are implicit and the girls’ expectations are that the men should be appreciative of their sexual favors by sharing some of their material resources. Their general sentiment is that these men are unfaithful to their wives to begin with; hence, one must get all that one can before he leaves you for someone else.

A growing number of young men are also engaging in cross-generational sexual relations with older, mostly divorced or widowed Gambian women. The older women in these relationships are called *jek* or *Jigeg* in Wolof—meaning an experienced woman. They are mostly of middle-class status. Their young guys are called “toyboys.” Generally they are either employed by their *jek* or are close friends or employees of acquaintances. They partake in sexual liaisons with young men on their own terms, aside from sex, they buy them clothing, give them money, food, or even—if they can afford it—a car. However, unlike the sugar-daddy/honey-baby relations that are made and expressed

openly/publicly because they are commonly accepted, the jigeg-toyboy relations unfold clandestinely because they are frowned upon. This speaks to the policing of women's sexuality in The Gambia. While an older man is able to solicit and engage in multiple relations with women (young and old) openly and publicly, the contrary is simply impossible because it would bring about devastating gossip and stir uproar for the transgression of socio-sexual mores.

#### The "Semesters"-Local Gambian Relationships

"Semester" is the name given to Gambian men and women from the diaspora who live mainly in Europe or the U.S. They generally visit The Gambia during their vacation times (mostly around the Christmas and end-of-year season) to maintain connections with their families and their homeland. The typical semester has lived abroad for quite some time. She/he generally takes care of their families by sending remittances, paying for school fees, buying food and goods, and generally maintaining households. The month of December is the height of the tourism season, when both semesters and tourists come to enjoy the many festivities that take place during Christmas holidays. In fact many semesters and local Gambians alike put off having their wedding celebrations until December to be able to hold them in The Gambia. There is even a joke about this, referring to the fact that most local Gambians save their best outfits for December. Semesters come from different socio-economic backgrounds. Some are working class with little education, while others are professionals with higher education, who generally got their degree studying in European or U.S. universities and colleges. The success of the semester is determined by his/her economic wealth, the building of their own compound in The Gambia, their education and the education of their children. Semesters

tend to enjoy social capital for the simple fact that they were able to migrate to the Global North, even if they don't belong to a middle or upper-class family. I am always amazed to see how semesters are introduced by their family members with pride, for it signals that they have ties to the Global North. Very often, you hear a family member say: "this is so-and-so; he/she is my semester relative who lives in country X." There's even a possessive noun that comes with this term in Wolof, *suma semester* meaning "my semester," which is often used by individuals or locals involved with a semester as a term of endearment; a variante is *sunu semester* (our semester), used mostly by family members. In general, the semesters I interviewed shared that, while abroad, they work really hard and when they come to The Gambia, they want to be treated well and get the chance to enjoy what their country has to offer. A semester told me: "After all, the toubabs get to enjoy the country. Why can't we do the same in our own country with our own people?" (2016 interview).

Most semesters who visit The Gambia spend months saving to prepare for their trips. They have to save enough resources to buy goods and give money to family members, while at the same time purchasing material goods for themselves in order to show signs of modernity and wealth, which justifies their emigration. If they stay with family members, they must provide the daily allowance for food. And if they go out with family and friends, they are expected to pay for cover fees for bars / clubs, partially or in-full, and offer drinks. This gives semesters a lot of leverage over family and friends, and the opportunity to benefit from special treatment. Often, male semester status gives one the chance to seek or be introduced to a potential lover. Indeed, male semesters are constantly offered opportunities to meet women by family members and friends, which

may lead to dating and potentially marriage. When going out with family and friends in social spaces, female semesters are generally not approached or offered a chance to seek a mate in the same way. They are expected to follow the expectation of female humility described earlier.

This is certainly one of the most revealing aspects of semester participation in the Gambian sexscape: the way gender plays a huge role in determining who gets to engage in sexual liaisons and who doesn't, at least openly. The female semesters I came in contact with during this research often came with their husbands and children. Those who were single came to meet up with their lovers, who were either from Europe or the U.S., in order to enjoy their holidays together. Some also caught up with an old flame—someone with whom they had a relationship prior to emigrating. Female semesters were generally reluctant to admit or reveal sexual encounters with fellow Gambians. The idea of being seen as engaging in different sexual liaisons is one that no respectable Gambian woman—semester or not—wants. However, during my fieldwork, I observed several female semesters being entertained by guys in and around the local bars, nightclubs, and restaurants frequented by mostly middle- and upper-class Gambians. So, most female semesters remain silent about their eventual sexual encounters during vacation in order to keep their respectability, to keep up appearances in a patriarchal society. Very often in my interviews, female semesters expressed their need to find mates who were going to be able to take care of them or at least be able to bring something to the table. A female semester from the U.S. told me in an interview:

Most Gambian men living here don't have nothing to help you improve your life, even if you like them, you have to be ready to take care of them and help them

come to the States; that is not something I am willing to do right now. I need a man that can make my life better, not someone I have to take care of. (Interview December 2015).

This was the sentiment of many of the female semesters I spoke to, they were very often reluctant to engage with a local Gambian man because he was not financially secure enough. Another reservation that female semesters expressed in dealing with local Gambian men is the fear that once the man progressed, he would be bound to get a second wife. The idea of helping a partner, struggling together, and having him in the end take a second younger wife who would potentially enjoy the fruit of their efforts didn't sit well with them. As expressed by a female semester from London:

I helped my childhood boyfriend come to London, we got married and began a family. Once he got adjusted, got his documents and began making money, he visited The Gambia. He called me from here and told me that he just married a second wife. I was devastated, but what was I supposed to do. I just had to stay in my marriage and keep working for me and my children.” (December 2015 interview)

Many of the female semesters I interviewed, married or single, shared their fear of having their men taken away by a younger and more attractive woman. Married female semesters indicated that they didn't trust their husbands to come to The Gambia by themselves because there are too many temptations. They often insist and prefer to visit together as a family, so that they can keep their eyes on them.

Unlike female semesters, male semesters, both married and single, are seen around town performing their masculinity by engaging in different sexual relationships

with local Gambian women. In fact, the majority of the male semesters I interviewed blatantly shared that they specifically came to The Gambia to “take care of business” (that is to say “meet young women”) and have fun. While in The Gambia, they solicit or are solicited by local young women who are willing to cater to their “needs.” As a semester from the U.S. noted: “here I am treated like a king, I can get any girl I want because they think I have money; and these are girls that I couldn’t dream of getting when I was a ‘nobody’” (December 2015). This is the sentiment shared by many male semesters I interviewed. They felt that after working hard in the Global North, when coming back home they wanted to enjoy the fruit of their labor. One of them told me: “In England, you don’t have much control of your life, you have to beat the clock and work long hours to make ends meet, so you work hard and look forward to having fun in December.” In many of the bars, nightclubs, and restaurants frequently visited by middle- and upper-class Gambians, there often operate groups of young women who move along looking to catch a semester. These are usually very attractive girls dressed in the latest fashions, as their objective is to emulate the models shown in music videos. They are usually in their early 20s, they are physically fit with, long straight waves (of the Beyoncé type), and sometimes bleach their skin with lightening cream. They wear tight and short dresses with high-heeled shoes, and knock-off name brand bags such as Yves Saint Laurent and Chanel. Male semesters are eager to show these women a good time. One of these rare women in this category I was able to talk to once told me that “she and most of the women around are looking for a semester husband!” While these women engage in intimate and eventually sexual relationships with male semesters in their search

for a man to marry, the male semesters only want to have a good time. A semester who lives in Switzerland and who I interviewed said:

When I come to The Gambia, I come with a lot of money; I want to party and have a bunch of girls around me. The girls are willing to do whatever I want because they want a semester. Sometimes I am surprised to see that they are willing to have a threesome with me. Here, money talks.” (Interview December 2015).

This male semester is representative of most of the male semesters I interviewed. For them, they generally come back to the homeland to play, which simply means engaging in sexual relationships with local Gambian females. These guys come back home to enjoy their sexual fantasies. They want to be seen as wealthy and desirable, thanks to their ties to the Global North. They very much enjoy their status as male semesters in a patriarchal society. They shared that to get a woman in The Gambia, in the words of one, “as long as your pocket is fat, you can get whatever woman you want.” Indeed, an important part of a man’s attractiveness in that context is his ability to fully assume the role of provider. As I was told more than once, in a demonstration of the health of the Gambian patriarchal order: “a man doesn’t have to be attractive, he just needs to be a good provider.”

Some of these men revealed that they were married mostly to Gambian women with whom they lived abroad. They said that they missed being with a more traditional woman, as opposed to the Gambian women in the Global North who have abandoned their Muslim, traditional beliefs. When I pressed them on the fact that many of their behaviors could be considered un-Islamic and against ‘traditional’ values, they often deflected and asserted that, as men, they can get away with a lot more than women could,

because that is just how the society is set up, fair or not. While most guys find comfort in asserting their masculinity and pride in using their money in order to gain status and the chance to fulfill sexual fantasies, others come to find a wife. During my fieldwork, I attended five wedding parties, all of which were between a male semester groom and a local Gambian bride. Some of the couples met through family ties or while vacationing. These weddings were often very lavish and extravagant. I remember hearing a female guest at a wedding banquet say that “the bride is lucky and fortunate because she got a semester husband that will be able to take care of her!” The interesting thing is that might not be the case at all. Many male semesters I interviewed held low paying jobs in Europe or the U.S. Only few were professionals with “good paying jobs.” Many of the men interviewed would have to work several jobs to take care of their local bride and her family, while they wait for them in The Gambia. Some of these guys struggle in their low paying jobs to afford to give their new brides the opportunity to emigrate to the Global North. And once the wives make it, they are surprised to find their husbands living in such impoverished conditions. Some never even get to emigrate due in large part to lack of visa approvals. But many stay in The Gambia because it is cheaper for their semester husbands to keep them living ‘back home’. It is important to note that the majority of these marriages end up in divorce following the men’s inability to upkeep their wives and families or to resolve the visa issue, as told by my interlocutors during my fieldwork and my participant-observations. While most male semesters are interested in seeking local young chic women, others are also interested in seeking liaisons with local Gambian males as well. During my informal group discussion with Gambian MSM, one sex worker said that he was due to be visited by his married male semester “friend” from

London. They met over Facebook and began messaging each other. They developed a “relationship.” His male semester was due to visit him the following January, when they planned to rent an apartment in the Burubi area for the length of his visit (Interview December 2016).

### Lebanese, East Asian, and West African migrants

Lebanese participation in the sexscape varied in several important ways. For one, Lebanese expats own most of the hotels, restaurants, and bars that cater to tourists, and brothels that cater to locals and other West African migrants. They often serve as mediators/pimps to link tourists to Gambians in the tourism sexual economy. As pimps they bring women from Morocco to do sex work with Lebanese, Syrian, and Upper class Gambians [2]who specifically entertain the fantasy of having sex with light-skinned women. As business owners who employ young Gambians, they are also very much involved in sugar-daddy-honey-baby relationships. They employ Gambians, paying them meager salaries for their labor, or at times nothing if they agree to work as waiters or bartenders or maids, in hopes of having the chance to meet white global north tourists. Unlike their Gambian sugar-daddy counterparts who at times are willing to marry their sugar-babies, the Lebanese daddies will not entertain such an idea. Though these Lebanese daddies are known to have several extra-marital affairs or liaisons with their young Gambian female employees or others, in accordance with the racial decorum of their Lebanese expat community, they do not marry local Gambians. Marriage for many of these Lebanese men is reserved for Lebanese women or perhaps white expats. Lebanese men may not engage in relationships with local Gambian men. If they eventually do, it is done behind closed doors. Lebanese men are willing to sleep with

local Gambian women and have children with them. However, generally speaking, they don't see Gambian women as being of the marriageable kind, for it goes against the sense they have of their position in the racial order, as I observed during fieldwork. Their modus operandi is that they racially and economically feel superior over Gambians and fundamentally look down on them. They operate as *de facto* whites. They carry racial stereotypes about Gambians that follow colonial narratives: the hyper-sexuality of African women, the laziness of the Gambians who just want to receive handouts, while stealing from you and running your business to the ground. For that reason, Lebanese expats prefer to hire Bangladeshi, Indians or Pakistani as middle managers, while Gambians are hired as workers. These East Asian (mostly) men work for and safeguard Lebanese expats' businesses. They arrived in The Gambia as single men looking for a better opportunity and usually within a year or so are able to get jobs as mid-level managers. This eventually allows them to spend their money in mid-range brothels or go to the bars frequented by global north tourists to link up with a bargirl.

Other West African migrants usually participate in the sexscape as pimps, sex workers, waiters, and bodyguards in the bars that cater to tourists. The women usually work as petty traders selling goods to tourists on the beach or in craft markets, commercial sex workers in the brothels, and/or sex workers in the tourism sexual economy.

### Brothels in The Gambia

During my fieldwork in 2016, I discovered the existence of brothels in The Gambia, thanks to Brother Malcolm, the Director for Network for AIDS Action, an auxiliary department working under the Ministry of Health. Brother Malcolm's program is

mandated to target state-identified at-risk groups such as female sex workers and MSM for HIV/AIDS prevention. I will discuss at length the role of Brother Malcolm and his program in chapter 5. Our meetings gave me the opportunity to take trips with him to distribute condoms to female sex workers working in the two brothels located in Dippakunda and Serrekunda, para-urban towns in the greater Kanifing municipality. My visits to these two brothels allowed me to lead an informal group discussion with 24 commercial female sex workers. The brothel in Dippakunda, which caters to working class local clients, is located in an extremely poor and depressed neighborhood. In this brothel, there are two main buildings: one of them houses the women, and the other has a small bar attached to it, which serves beers, soft drinks and *kaana*—a locally made alcohol (Palm wine). As we entered the compound, there were several women engaged in different activities; some were eating lunch together, some were sitting under the mango tree chatting, others were undoing old wool yarn for hair braiding, and still others were getting their hair braided. The women seemed at ease with Brother Malcolm. They were quick to greet him excitedly and asked if he brought them “goodies”. After the greetings, Brother Malcolm approached a heavy-set woman sitting under the mango tree and introduced me to her. She is a Senegalese former sex worker who is now the gatekeeper of the brothel. After getting permission from the female gatekeeper, she and Brother Malcolm asked the ladies to join us under the mango tree. The women brought small wooden stools and plastic chairs to join us. Brother Malcolm introduced me as a Gambian, who grew up in the United States, currently in school doing my thesis and fieldwork on the same issues as he is. She asked if they were willing to discuss their experiences in the business. Some smiled and looked at me with skepticism. I went along

with Brother Malcolm's introduction and expressed gratitude for their willingness to talk to me. Not all of the women participated in the discussion, but 16 of them did. To break the ice, I assured them that their names would remain anonymous and that I was simply there to understand their life experiences. I proceeded to ask general questions: where are you from?; how and why did you decide to engage in this kind of work?; what kinds of services do you provide and how much do you charge your clients for them?; what physical and emotional issues arise with clients and colleagues?

The women were a mixture of Liberians, Nigerians, Sierra Leones, Senegalese, and two Gambians. Their age range went from 18 to late-40s. They looked like women who had had a rough life, which had left various traces on their bodies. This was even the case of the youngest one. Some had dark marks on their bodies, others had scars on their faces, aside from their ethnic markings, perhaps as the result of a fight. They generally looked unkempt. As they began to speak mainly in pigeon English and Wolof (the other West African women did not speak Wolof at all), they expressed that they mainly came to this line of work out of necessity. Some were orphaned by the Liberian and Sierra Leone wars of the 1990s, or were runaways from abusive families. Some spoke of the loss of their parents, which left them to fend for themselves and their siblings, and described their willingness to do whatever is needed to get out of the abject poverty of their families, this fits the definition of survival sex work. Many of these women were mothers who left their children under the care of relatives. Though many acknowledged the hardship and struggles they faced in their line of work, they were nonetheless proud to say that they are able to help their families. Two of the women, the gatekeeper and another woman in her early 30s, expressed pride that they were able to

quit the business: one because of marriage and the other because she was now serving as the gatekeeper for the brothel. The women charged their clients prices according to the services they provided; for each penetration they charged D50 dalasi (\$1.17), which they call normal sex. If the client wants anal or oral sex, they are charged D75 dalasi (\$1.7); further, they have to pay 40 percent of their earnings to the brothel owners daily, which they give to the gatekeeper, who then gives it to her boss.

One Gambian woman who spoke began crying. I asked her why she was crying, and one of the women said that her sister took her white *fiancé* from her on her wedding day, which left her heartbroken. The other women told her not to cry and to let things go, I then moved to console her. At this point, the gatekeeper asked her to go inside and cool down, which prompted the other women to comment on her situation. They shared that “the white man was bad but that the sister was even worse, because that is her flesh and blood, how could she do that to her own sister, that is just wicked!” The Gambian woman left the group crying and went inside the building, lying on a sponge mattress on a concrete floor. Realizing that we just couldn’t continue our conversation, the women paused for a moment and then expressed the hardship involved in this life and that I should never forget about that aspect of their life and work. We ended our conversation by me expressing my gratitude in the trust they had in talking to me. They wished me well and hope that I end my studies well. As we were leaving I asked if I could say goodbye to the Gambian woman but the gatekeeper politely told me in Wolof, “it’s okay she will be fine, she gets that way sometimes,” in an assertive manner. I then said, “okay,” moving away from the door. However, I told her to tell her that I said good-bye and hoped that she finds peace; the gatekeeper smiled and said “I will!” At this point,

Brother Malcolm told me to tell the driver to bring the boxes with the condoms from the car and we left the boxes with the gatekeeper, who was then going to distribute the condoms to the women. Moved by this experience, I then sat in my car feeling a bit emotional. As Brother Malcolm approached my car window, he asked if I could follow them to the next brothel, I said “yes” and I began driving behind them towards Serrekunda. As I was driving, while overcome with sadness, I realized that I also had to get myself together.

After going through the busy Serrekunda market, we turned into a narrow street in front of a two story building, which seemed to have been an old motel painted in green. As we entered the building, there were 9 women and a man (gatekeeper) eating from the same bowl/basin, a common way of sharing a meal in the Senegambian region. All looked up and greeted Brother Malcolm with deference. A short Senegalese woman, who bleached her skin and looked to be in her late 30s, got up and greeted him by asking about his family and wishing them well. Brother Malcolm then turned to me and introduced me. She asked us to follow her; she took us to her small bedroom. Brother Malcolm introduced me as a Gambian from the States working on her doctoral thesis, and that I am here doing fieldwork in order to complete my research. He told her that I was doing the same work as him and asked her if they would be willing to talk to me about their work experiences. The woman responded by saying that it was wonderful and that it should not be a problem, because they had confidence in him. She left the room to talk to the other women, then came back to tell us that as soon as they finish eating, they would join us. She then began bringing chairs into the room for the women who were about to join us. I helped. Brother Malcolm sat on the edge of the bed and I sat on a chair. The

ladies made their way into the room. Unlike the previous brothel, these ladies were better kept and looked less impacted by the deplorable conditions of the brothel<sup>[3]</sup>. At this point, Brother Malcolm and the Senegalese lady introduced me to the other women, who then said “no problem” and smiled at me. Unlike the smiles and demeanor of the previous group of ladies, these women looked quite relaxed and receptive. I asked them the same questions I had asked the previous group about their experiences as commercial sex workers. To begin with, this brothel had better living arrangements than the previous one, for each of the ladies had their own room with queen size beds, personal shower, and complete privacy. In the first brothel, the women shared space and they simply had sponge mattresses about the floor. Among the ladies in this brothel, one was from Guinea Bissau, two from Senegal, and three from The Gambia. There were others from Nigeria and Sierra Leone. They had left to go about town and were expected to return later in time for their shift. The Senegalese woman began speaking first; she seemed to play a big sister role to the women and expressed in Wolof that she is an experienced *chaga* (sex worker). She said “that life is very hard because clients sometimes don’t want to pay for their services”; she said “I began this line of work to take care of herself and family. Clients are charged D100 dalasi (\$2.4) per ejaculation, a price set by the owners, who are two Lebanese sisters; anything extra, they must pay more, which is negotiated by the women and their clients.

The clients that frequent this “higher-class” brothel are mostly local men, West African immigrants, and East Asian men from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan as told by women in the brothel. Each night beginning at 8pm, the women must be ready and line-up at the veranda and wait to be chosen by their potential clients. Out of their earnings,

they must pay D650 dalasi (\$15.00) per day to the owners; they collect their money every day, according to the women. Failure to pay the D650 could result in being shamed in front of their peers or being kicked out of the brothel altogether. They all expressed that the owners were very bad to them. If an argument arose between them and their clients, the clients' side was preeminent: the client was then asked to pay for half rather than the full base price. Women are generally left to fend for themselves, especially when they get into issues with the police. Sometimes, the police would come into the brothel and raid the place, even though sex work is legal in The Gambia. This is done as a shake down to get money from the women, for they know that they will generally not have the means to fight back. This is where at times according to the women, Brother Malcolm steps in to advocate on their behalf. When women are taken to the police station because maybe they can't pay the bribe to the police, one of their colleagues will call Brother Malcolm, and he will go to the police station to get them released. The women express their gratitude in having Brother Malcolm on their side, especially when they are arrested. The women again are all mothers, who have the burden of having to take care of their children and extended families.

After our group discussion, I expressed my gratitude and they told me that they needed help, so that they are able to get out of this line of work because it is not easy. The Senegalese women asked if I wanted to see upstairs. I said yes and followed her; she said, "this is where the Nigerians and Sierra Leonian stay." As we were leaving, I noticed at the veranda, some of the young women were combing and fixing their lace front weaves, I guess to prepare for their night shift. They jokingly told me, "your hair is easier to manage than ours." I responded, "that is the reason why I locked my hair: it takes less

work.” The Senegalese lady, followed us to the gate and took the boxes of condoms. She prayed that we arrive home safely and that Allah guide me in my studies to reach completion and help me not to forget about them and their plight. I thanked her and gave her a hug. She went back inside. Brother Malcolm, upon looking at my face, asked me if I was well. I responded that although enriched by the day’s experiences, I was nevertheless saddened. He said that he understood, and that life isn’t always easy. We agreed to meet in his office the next day. I got in my car and drove back to my family’s compound, for I needed to change my mind. That day made me realize how privileged I was.

#### The “Bumster”/Chanters Phenomena and the White Global North Female Tourists

Over the last two decades scholarly research about sex tourism has shifted from male sex tourism—who look for the services of female local sex workers—to female sex tourism—who look for the services of male local sex workers. This brought about scholarships on The Gambia about older white European women and their young Gambian male lovers. These relationships are often depicted as “romance tourism”, where white European female tourists are portrayed as independent women who are seeking relationships on their own terms, and/or are heroically disrupting patriarchal orders (see Ebron 1998). Such scholarly work leads to the feminizing of Gambian males and neglects to deal with other pertinent issues involved in what is in focus, such as race, nationality and a particular understanding of gender roles that reproduces the Victorian ideals of womanhood. Indeed, that is the only way to interpret the claim that white women are in need of romance to be able to engage sexually with local males.

Much has been written about Gambian beach boys who form relationships with mostly white global north female tourists who vacation in The Gambia (Wagner and Yamba 1986; Brown 1992; Ebron 1997; Nyanzi et al 2005; Lawson et al 2007; Ugglia 2011; McCombes 2012). They are generally referred to as ‘bumsters’, a derogatory term that many of the guys I interviewed resented because it stigmatizes young Gambian males working in the informal sector of the tourism industry. The term originated from Swedish tourists’ description of young Gambians begging for sweets and money, a sort of colonial narrative about good white folks, touring poor African villages while poor African children begged from them. In this dissertation, I choose to use the term “chanters” to describe Gambian beach boys because it was the emic term they used to describe themselves; some also preferred the expression “self-employed.” They used “chanters” to describe themselves as they have to labor: it requires skills to approach and deal with toubabs. “Chanters” allows us to move away from the criminalization of “bumsters.” I use “chanters” and “self-employed” as I write about these beach boys. By using “Chanters”, they and myself are acknowledging their involvement in The Gambia’s tourism-based sexual economy.

Chanters are generally unemployed or partially employed young men who engage in the informal economic activities of the tourism industry. Typically, they either have a high school degree or had to leave school earlier because of their family’s inability to pay for school fees. Most chanters in-migrate from rural to urban tourist sites such as the Kololi area or the Senegambia Strip. Others are urban guys who grew up in the Bakau area. They work as tour guides, taxi drivers, errands boys, craft market sellers, musicians, airport ground handlers, or waiters during the tourism season. And when the tourism

season ends, those who come from the rural areas go back home to farm or fish, while others hang around looking for jobs to make a meager living. As urban Gambians, they dress in western style clothing (jeans and t-shirts); sometimes on Friday, because of Juma (Friday Muslim prayers), they dress in traditional clothing to go to Mosque. Others adopt some semblance of Rastafarianism by wearing locs, listening to conscious reggae music, expressing a 'one love' ideology, which makes them very attractive to Global North female tourists (Ebron 1997; Nyanzi et al 2005).

The lack of employment opportunities coupled with restrictive emigration opportunities to Europe and the U.S. has forced many young Gambians, especially men, to use strategies to take advantage of the only capital they have – their bodies – to market erotic services as a means of to economic and social advancement. This is how young Gambian men engage in inter-generational sexual relations with Global north female tourists and sometimes with male tourists as well, when the opportunity arises.

#### Gambian Females and their Toubabs

Much of the scholarship on “sex tourism” in The Gambia has eschewed the more sensational relationships between young Gambian men and older white Global North tourists. This will explain the lack of interest scholars have had for the also ubiquitous relationship/friendship between older white Global North male tourists and their young Gambian female companions. The young Gambian girls and other African girls frequent the bars and restaurants of the Senegambia strip and of the TDA in general to meet tourists. These bars and restaurants are well known to cater to tourists who are looking to hook-up with Gambian and other West African young women who are engaged in The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy. They come to these bars and restaurants in

groups or alone, dancing and having fun with the hope of catching a companion—a “friend”—who could provide economic support, affection, and a possible trip to Europe. The girls who hang out in these tourists-focused bars and restaurants are generally different from those who frequent the bars and clubs that cater to middle class and Semester Gambians. In this script, the girls are not interested in looking for marriage. They know what the tourists want and they are willing to provide such services to them. Much more than the chanters, the behaviors of the young women who participate in this script is characterized as “sex work” by the larger Gambian population. This is due in part to the expectations of white Global North tourists, who are not coming to these bars for anything else but to find young African women to have sex with that very same night. It is because of that assumption that they have no choice but to be sexually active with their toubab “friend” that they are stigmatized as chaga, “sex workers.”

By the same token, many Gambian men of middle-class status as well as semesters don’t want to be associated with the young women who target the tourists, for if they were, they would run the risk of ruining their respectability and social capital. The young girls and women who frequent these tourist spots, generally hang out in bars and restaurants on a nightly basis, unlike the girls who prefer the spots where the semester and middle-class Gambian men go. The latter girls only hang out on weekends mostly in December, when the semesters are arriving. The tourist bar girls and women tend to be less educated and/or illiterate, extremely poor, and single mothers. Their livelihood is dependent upon getting and maintaining a relationship with toubabs. These women face many hardships, and it is with courage and resilience that they find creative ways to survive, using strategic sex to get their male companion to help take care of them and

their children. Chapter 3 highlights the life experiences of the young girls and women who go to these bars and restaurants in the TDA in search of a companionship with global north white tourists.

The goal of this chapter was to present the larger Gambian sexscape, in order to contextualize the tourism sexual economy in a way that illuminates the specific socio-sexual scripts that make the Gambian sexscape. To understand the Gambian sexscape, it was first necessary to explore how intimacy is shared in Gambian society. It is my contention that Gambian ways of being intimate provide the scripting material for the tourism-based sexual economy to develop. Gambians' engagement in the tourism sexual economy is very much informed by their understanding of intimacy and by their socio-religious and cultural practices. Socially, there is an expectation in Gambian society that in relationships/friendships, those who are economically able must assist those who are less so. This is tied to the notion of *teranga*. For Gambians it is generally accepted and expected that intimacy cannot be divorced from practices of exchange and material reciprocity. That is how Gambian social relations are structured.

The following two chapters aim to analyze at length the socio-sexual scripts that make The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy.

### CHAPTER III

#### Jabarrs, Sugar-babies, Chepehs, FSWs: The Gambian Sexscape, Gambian Women's Perspectives, and the Tourism-Based Sexual Economy

In societies in which seclusion and surveillance prevail, the implicit concept of female sexuality is active; in societies in which there are no such methods of surveillance and coercion of women's behavior, the concept of female sexuality is passive (Mernissi 1975: 30-31)

This chapter relays Gambian women voices as they go about and talk about their lives and the way they have been dealing with sex and sexuality in a particularly controlling majority Muslim society. The chapter pays careful attention to Gambian and other West African women's participation in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy. Gambian women's sexualities and sex work have been largely ignored in scholarly literature about tourism-based sexual economies in the West African sub-region. During the initial phase of my research, while reading mostly non-Gambian scholars' texts about The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy, I was surprised to discover how little had been written on Gambian women's participation in that trade. It is as if these scholars had decided that Gambian and other West African women's involvements in the country's tourism-based sexual economy were of no interest; they took it for granted the fact that everywhere women engage in sexual labor: "nothing new here!" Instead, almost all the scholarship on The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy are exclusively focused on Gambian men's mostly heterosexual sex work with older white female tourists. As a Gambian woman, I found it important to make sure that this dissertation includes a chapter on women's

role(s) in The Gambian sexscape and tourism-based sexual economy. Indeed, their presence in the sexual economy is quite ubiquitous, and examining their participation does reveal a lot about the ways in which over the years they have worked to subvert gender and sexual norms.

The mostly Islamic Gambian society has been preoccupied with the surveillance of women's—young or not—sexuality. As suggested in this chapter's epigraph, this surveillance fulfills the *sine qua non* condition for an "active female sexuality" to be (Fatima Mernissi 1975). The accepted reality that Gambian females possess an active sexuality informs the ways in which socio-religious sanctions are enacted to monitor and constrain their sexual behaviors.

When growing up in The Gambia, as a Muslim child, I clearly remember the various ways young women were educated to refrain from sexual activity before marriage, because female virginity is highly valued by families, and especially by female kin. When girls engage in premarital courtship either with older men or with young men of their age group, they must walk a delicate line to make sure that they are not seen as cheap or easy girls, which would ruin their respectability. To engage in open promiscuity is highly frowned upon, and fear of humiliation makes one stay in compliance at least in the public eye. This pushes girls to eventually fake their virginity when they marry, and if they cannot fake their virginity because they were once pregnant, they may be humiliated and stigmatized as easy/bad girls.

Adama, a 23 year older unmarried waitress once told me: "Here you don't want your private business to get out there; if you sleep with these young boys, they will tell their friends while drinking their *attaya*; they don't respect privacy". Though public

shaming by boyfriends and husbands are not common because men are aware of the humiliation it brings to girls and women, once in a while young men's immaturity and their intent to show off to their male friends bring boyfriends and husbands to out their girlfriends or wives in public for not being a virgin. Husbands can destroy the social good standing of their wives by claiming that they were not virgins when they got married to get back at them for any other reason. For many girls, keeping one's virginity is very important; it is the paramount socio-sexual prescription that one learns about before anything else, and it is constantly repeated to you once you reach puberty.

I begin the chapter by examining what is considered to be the "proper" female sexual behaviors in Gambian, "traditional" and predominantly Muslim and patriarchal contexts. This is done to allow for a better comprehension of Gambian female participation in tourism-based "sex work," despite the striking and unavoidable socio-religious constraints that combine to stigmatize female sex work in a way that male sex work is not. Through informal group discussions and individual interviews with local Gambian and other West African women, participant-observation in Gambian women-Global North male tourists meeting sites, and extensive interviews with Gambian and other West African women who have engaged and/or who are engaged in sex work with male tourists, the chapter reveals the many circumstances that have brought these women to use their young bodies as currency—to maneuver and bypass socio-cultural and religious mores for their own benefit, at the least social cost possible.

Lastly, the chapter uncovers specific Gambian and other West African women's individual strategic, and—as many verbalize—temporary use of sex for both family and personal betterment, in a context characterized by a conspicuous lack of opportunities,

vast youth unemployment and under-employment, and abject poverty. My thick descriptions have only one objective: to try to reveal and highlight the many ways Gambian and other West African women assume their sexual agency and perform an active sexuality in the Gambian sexcape for both survival and pleasure.

### **Socio-Sexual Scripts of Gambian Womanhood**

Although Gambian socio-sexual scripts have been informed jointly by Islam, local traditions, and Christianity, it is Islam that has had the most profound impact on contemporary Gambian notions of morality and sexual mores (Touray 2006). As Isatou Touray has aptly noted, Islam has been and remains influential in constructing lived experiences of sexuality in The Gambia, where sex and sexuality are constructed to exist nowhere else but within the framework of marriage, and where heterosexual relationships are strictly enforced normative practices (Touray 2006:2). Sometimes, it is very difficult to discern which aspects of Gambian socio-cultural practices are rooted in Islam, and which ones express local and other traditions. Islam reinforced local traditions in all of the major ethnic groups (Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola), and since Wolof traditions and language has served as the lingua franca in both Senegal and The Gambia, it dominates and unifies local traditions (Diouf 1998). In many aspect of Gambian society, what governs male-female relationships and interactions is tied to Islamic law on gender and sexual norms. Both Christians and Muslims, regardless of ethnic belongings, adhere to these norms. It is very common in gatherings to observe men and women sitting in different areas or dancing separately, regardless of their religious and ethnic identities. Though separation of the sexes is not as rigid as in other parts of the Islamic world, the

very fact that it exists in The Gambia is very much tied to the influence of Islam. How does Islam view female sexuality?

Many have argued that the fact that Islam blended so well in West Africa in general is due in great part to the fact that mostly patriarchal systems were already at work there (Darboe 2004; Saine 2012; Saho 2011). In *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (1975), Fatima Mernissi sought to trace and decode the perceived inequalities between men and women in Islam. One of Mernissi's main points consisted in asserting that when examining female sexuality in Islam, one must differentiate between theory and practice. Unlike Christianity, Islam doesn't necessarily start from the premise that females are inferior and that sexuality is to be repressed (Mernissi 1975:29). Instead, Islam sees females as powerful beings and considers sexuality to be a practice that must unfold under the guidance of God, that is, between a husband and a wife for procreation and pleasure. Female sexuality ought to be feared and controlled if stability is to exist under the *Umma* (community of believers). Chaos and disorder must be avoided at all cost (*fitna*). *Fitna* has a double meaning: it is "the fear of disorder and chaos," but it is also a beautiful, seductive woman, a *femme fatale* who makes men lose their self-control, a kind of sexual disorder provoked by women (1975:31). When discussing Moroccan society with regards to female sexuality, Mernissi asserts that Muslim societies all have two contradictory theories of female sexuality or sexual dynamics: explicit and implicit. The explicit theory of female sexuality is grounded in the belief that men are aggressive in their interaction with women, while women are passive. This is a view where the sexes are seen as antagonistic; it is a kind of super 'macho' male vision that characterizes men as powerful beings with knowledge to

conquer and dominate women (1975:32). The implicit theory of female sexuality, on the other hand, is etched into Muslim sub-consciousness and claims that women must be controlled to prevent men from being distracted from their social and religious responsibilities. In the implicit theory, a woman is seen to prey on a man, and the man is her passive victim (1975:33). Embedded in both of these theories are acknowledgments of female *qaid* (power): “the power to deceive and defeat men, not by force, but by cunning and intrigue” (1975:33).

Hence, according to Mernissi, the spatial configuration of Muslim gender interactions ought to be understood in terms of women’s *qaid* power (sexual power), which needs to be subdued and tamed in order to avoid *fitna* and disruptions under the *Umma*. In The Gambia, such acknowledgment of female *qaid* can be observed as well. Both women and men talk of women as being and bringing *fitna*. There is a saying in Wolof, which was repeated to me by many of my interlocutors: *jigaan deffa barre fitna; jigaan fitna rek len hamm; or jigaan sataan la*, meaning “women are full of chaos; that chaos is known to women; women are the devil.” Note, this is in line with the image of the femme fatale. The last phrase is often said when a man is caught having an affair; the phrase targets the female lover and men are nothing but their victims. These ideas evoke nothing but a world where women are seen as beings that can potentially bring disorder into their lives, the lives of men, their entire household and community, all this due to their active female sexuality. This virtual fascination with female sexuality and its power can be found in various sociocultural locations in Gambian society, and particularly as it pertains to its gender and socio-sexual scripts.

As discussed in chapter 2, socio-sexual scripts in Gambian society reproduce and reify gender roles, infusing them with hetero-normative thinking and understanding. Similar to such realities in other African countries, Gambian women have authority in the private realm, the household, in matters involving reproduction, childrearing and power over offspring, and ancestral knowledge (see the work of Amadiume 2005; Arnfred 2007). This fosters strong intergenerational bonds between female kin and daughters throughout their life span. Female kin are responsible for teaching girls to be responsible daughters and nieces, to become great caretakers, laborers, and pious Muslim women. Girls are educated and encouraged to uphold Islamic moral values such as in praying five times a day, fasting during the month of *Ramaadan*, not drinking alcohol, being charitable, showing obedience to parents and elders, not having sex out of wedlock, safeguarding her chastity, and being ready to be a good wife and mother.

In The Gambia, silence about sex and sexuality is the norm. One doesn't get a sex talk with his/her parents or sex education in schools, as might happen in the Global North. Young people are made to understand from an early age that sex is not something that they can engage in at all until marriage. When girls reach puberty, they are taught not to engage in sex and to stay away from boys; that sex is reserved for marriage. They are transmitted the preoccupation to not get pregnant out of wedlock. It is when they are young and becoming of age that girls' sexuality is the most observed and scrutinized, perhaps. A girl is expected to live in her family's compound until she gets married, at which time she'll move into her new marital home, which sometimes consists of her living in a compound with her husband and his parents. Cultural scenarios consist of relatives negotiating the eventual marriage and the groom-to-be giving bridewealth to his

bride-to-be. Upon agreement, a marriage ceremony *taake goor* (meaning the male wedding) is held for the couple by their male kins (both bride and groom) at the mosque. The norm is that after the wedding the newly married couple enjoys sex and intimacy and the outcome is that they will produce offspring. It is understood that sex should take place in a marriage not outside of it.

As a polygamous society, where men can or are expected to have more than one wife, Gambian Muslim women come to their marriage with the understanding that their husband will one day take a second, third, or fourth wife if he so chooses. The normal sequence of events for women as expected and codified in Gambian socio-religious understanding for women is marriage and motherhood, aimed at keeping women respectable (“good” women). Behaving outside this cultural script about gender and sexuality would mean that the girl/woman would place herself outside of respectability (i.e., become “bad” women). Once married, a wife is expected to be taken care of by her husband, but support must also come from a wife’s in-laws, if they are able to do so. In return for being taken care of, she is expected to maintain a good household by preparing meals for her husband, keeping up the household, taking care of the children, and being prepared to provide and give affection and sexual pleasure to her husband.

Women have terms of endearment to express their affect for their husbands. The more “modern” women, who have been exposed to a Western notion of romance, call their husband “baby or Chéri coco,” and like to go out as a couple wearing matching outfits made from the same material called *asobi*. While many older couples do not show affection in public because it is frowned upon and considered to be too identical to Global North ways, they express their affection privately. In the contemporary context,

young Gambian couples publicly show their affection for one another as couples: they hold hands, eventually, dance together, and announce or publicize their relationship on their social media accounts. If a woman's name is Amie and her husband's Lamin, she will write *Amie mu Lamin*, meaning Lamin's Amie, in possessive terms. Nowadays, Senegambians celebrate Valentine's Day, and wives and sometimes girlfriends can be seen on social media such as Facebook and Instagram, expressing and professing their love for their man, showing the gifts he showered them with and making videos and photo montages of their couples in celebrations of their relationships.

Télé Futurs Medias or TFM, a Senegalese television station owned by Youssou Ndour, a famous Senegalese Mbalax Musician, covers Valentine's Day every year with special programming for couples wearing red clothes during which husbands cook and show their romantic attachments to their wives in celebration of their love for them. Young Gambian women are not just borrowing Western notions of romance and eroticism, however; they are refashioning it to fit their own reality, as Yamz, a 28-year-old married mother of one told me: "I like to wear my Victoria Secret with my *bin bin* (see below), it makes me feel young. I am not a *mere* (local term for an older women) so don't expect me to wear a *bethio* (see picture 1.4)" (Interviewed in July 2015).

Yamz's statement reveals the ways young Gambians blend Global North and local practices of eroticism, while at the same time asserting their adhesion to modernity. When Yamz says that she is not a *mere* (older woman) and doesn't wear *bethio* (the small wrap-around that older women wear under their outfits, which serve as under garment) is not at all surprising: it gives her the opportunity to assert her modernity. Young people in Sub-Saharan Africa are very much consuming Western reality shows, *telenovelas* from

Brazil and Mexico, Bollywood films, and Nollywood productions (locally produced movies from Nigeria and Ghana). These globally derived images give young Gambians the opportunity to selectively borrow and appropriate content and make them fit with their own local realities (see Masquelier 2009; Abu-Lughod 1995; Larkin 1997). Though these global images, on the one hand, are sometimes in direct contrast with local understanding of gender and sexual scripts, what young Gambian Muslims girls/women get from them are new kinds of romance and intimacy that helps them create new forms of social identities as girls/women.

Mothers and aunts also serve as conveyors of erotic knowledge to younger women, which allows them to better understand their sexuality and erotic powers. On her wedding night and or the day before, prior to being taken to her husband's compound for the consumption of marriage, the bride-to-be is schooled in the subject of eroticism and seduction by her female kin. She is reminded of her sexual power to seduce and satisfy her husband's sexual needs first before taking care of her own. This education gives younger women lessons on proper sexual hygienic practices. It provides them with erotic material culture such as *jeli jeli* or *bin bin* (waist crystal beads, (see picture 1.4), *thiouraye* (incense) that has various sexually suggestive names, and *bethio* (small wrap-around, a kind of *lingerie*) that allows her to express her sexuality and power in the art of seduction. As Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2005) has observed in his work on Senegal, "these products are said to bewitch and turn men's heads, making them lose reason so that men vibrate with pleasure" (Nyamnjoh 2005:308).

One day while at my family's compound chatting with my female cousins and aunt, a Senegalese friend of my aunty dropped by to visit and show her new merchandise

(*bin bin* in different styles and colors, *thiouraye*, and erotic ointments). While my married cousins and I were inspecting her merchandise, a younger cousin around the age of 17 decided to look at the merchandise as well. The seller and my aunt admonished her immediately to move away from the merchandise because she was too young. Anta, the seller of the merchandise, asked my cousin, “why are you interested in the merchandise and what are you going to do with it.” Her questioning amazed me because, for one, she was a seller, whose main interest should be to sell not to regulate one’s sexuality. The second surprising thing was the look of horror on my cousin’s face: she was embarrassed by Anta’s questions, which pushed her to immediately walk away from Anta and her merchandise while replying “that she was just playing.” Realizing what just happened and sensing her embarrassment, I immediately told her not to worry because we will make sure that Anta brings her a suitcase of goodies on her wedding night. We all laughed and screamed, while my aunt answered in prayer *insallah*, meaning “God willing.”

The implicit message from both Anta and my aunty was that these merchandise were reserved for married women who are expected to engage in sexual activities. Since she was not married, she wasn’t even allowed to look at it. The very act of showing interest by looking at the merchandise raised suspicion that she might be sexually active, a risk she can’t afford to take for the sake of her own respectability. When Sera, a 32 year old married mother of three, in recounting the night of her *murr* (the night when the covered bride is taken to her husband), she said she was shocked and mortified by all the sex talk from her aunties: “I was embarrassed when my Aunty Mam was making sexual gestures, and telling me how to please my husband, I didn’t know that she nor all of the

women were sexual like that, they gave me a *jeli jeli*, that glowed in the dark, incents like *nyefala tedah* (literally means “you’d better get to bed”) that is supposed to heighten the husband’s arousal. I was so shocked that I couldn’t look at them in the eyes, I just nervously smiled” (Interviewed June 2015).



Picture 1:4: Taken From What’s up Gambia, <http://www.whatson-gambia.com/>  
A young woman wearing a modern bethio and bin bin.

Sera’s story reveals the context in which sex and sexuality is openly discussed between female kin and girls the night of her wedding and thereafter. Once a woman gets married, her female kin is now free to give her knowledge about sex, and in doing so they are in fact welcoming her into adulthood and the circle of womanhood, a very important moment in a girl’s life in The Gambia. This night of ritual sex between a wife and a husband is in fact marked by the reification of gender hierarchy: her virgin female body

is taken by her virile male husband who expects to see the bloody proof that he is the very first one... (Lindisfarne 1994).

The moment in which a girl enters adulthood, she goes from being a *jangha* (young girl) to a *jigeg* (woman). By definition a *jangha* is a virgin unmarried young woman and in contrast a *jigeg* is not a virgin and is typically married. These Wolof terms for female sexual identity reveals the importance of virginity and marriage in The Gambia and Senegal (see the work of van Eerdewijk 2009). Though a similar distinction exists between adult male (*goor*) and non-adult male (*halel bu goor*), these terms are not linked to virginity or marital status as is the case for women. Unlike their female counterpart, young men are more likely to delay marriage to pursue educational and economic enhancements. Young men are allowed to express sexuality openly, for that is what it means to be a boy learning to be a man. These boys/young men are called *ndongo* in Wolof and *Kambaniya* in Mandinka, which means a carefree boy or student. Carefree boys are supposed to experiment, to learn how to flirt with girls, hang out with friends, smoke marijuana or cigarettes, and generally be outgoing (Saine 2012:132). Girls on the other hand do not have the same experimental phase. Though they may have a small window to flirt with boys, they must be mindful of tarnishing their reputation and of not getting pregnant. The boys' respectability and transition into manhood are not tied to their virginity or marital status; instead, they are linked to their educational and economic successes. Once a young man achieves these goals, he is pressured and expected to marry a "good" girl, whom he can create a family with.

The socio-sexual scripts available to married couples are linked to the ways in which marriages organize sexualities and one's entry into adulthood. As it does with so

many other things, Islam defines the construction of lived Gambian experiences of sexuality, regulating issues of inheritance, marriage, custody, divorce, widowhood, and sex (Touray 2006:2). As Yandeh, a mother of two daughters told me, epitomizing most of the preoccupations of the other mothers I interviewed, “whenever I pray, I ask that Allah gives my daughters husbands so that they leave my house with honor and respect and have their own households with their husbands and children; it would make me very happy to see my daughters married before I die” (Interviewed July 2015). Yandeh’s prayer is tied to the logic that, as a mother, she is responsible for ensuring that her daughters remain respectable and get married in an honorable way, to become “good” mothers and wives. Yandeh’s respectability will increase if she is looked at as having done a good job raising her daughters to be pious.

Virginity and the quest to get married permeate the consciousness of girls and women, and leaves them little room to enunciate their sexuality openly. Their silence about sex is nothing but an integral part of a public performance aimed at keeping up appearances as “good” and “respectable” girls and women. Children’s sex at birth strongly determines their place in society and that of their mothers. Girls in general experience discrimination early on in life with respect to education, marital and sexual choices. While children are welcome in Gambian households, parents often harbor strong desires to have boys instead of girls. This pushes some women to have more children than intended. The failure to have boys can lead women to be neglected in their marriages (Touray 2006:3:1). The socio-religious understanding is that a boy child becomes the future head of a household, which continues the patrilineal family line. Gambian society socially and materially privileges boys over girls. This affects girls

psychologically, emotionally and economically, particularly if they grew up in households that preserve material resources for education, skill development and trainings for their brothers and not for them.

In “Silence, pleasure and agency: sexuality of unmarried girls in Dakar, Senegal,” Anouka van Eerdewijk’s work with young unmarried Muslim girls in Dakar revealed two categories that young Dakarese boys place girls in: “real” girlfriends and “easy” girls (Eerdewijk 2009:17). For the young Dakarese boys, the “real” girlfriend is the girl you do not touch, i.e., sleep with; she is someone you love, share things with, and may not ask to misbehave because you must treat her as a lady. On the other hand, the so called “easy girl” is the one you have sex with because she is easily persuaded; she is not “serious,” which brings boys to treat her accordingly (2009:17). A similar categorization can be observed among boys in The Gambia. Though I have discussed above the “normal” ways women are supposed to enact their sexuality, strictly within the context of marriage, in which they entered as virgins. These ideals, although still at work in The Gambia, are naturally changing and reconfiguring to meet global social and economic realities. With girls now being more educated than in the past (at least in urban areas), and many Gambians living in urban settings, viewing Western television and images of companionship, romance, love relationships, many young Gambian women are delaying marriage and engaging in scripted sexual encounters with their peers, older men (sugar-daddies), “Semesters” (Gambian men who live in the diaspora), and global north tourists.

The following sections uncover the ways in which Gambian females actively display their sexuality by participating in the sexscape, carrying along sociocultural values and past practices, and entering in specific socio-sexual arrangements or scripts.

They can eventually begin premarital sexual relationships with local and foreign men by utilizing Gambian socio-sexual scripts based on hetero-normativity as a model. As many African scholars have noted, in many African contexts, past and present, intimacy is always embedded—in sometimes quite complex ways—in material exchanges (Cole 2004; Hunter 2010). Jennifer Cole (2004) aptly argued that in many African contexts various forms of “transactional sex” unfold, in which affect and material exchanges animate the sexual economies of everyday life (2004:597).

### **Sugar-Babies and Sugar-Daddies**

“Sugar-babies” and “Sugar-daddies relationships” have been defined by Africanist scholars as very much grounded in “transactional sex.” These relationships are generally depicted as intergenerational liaisons between mostly young women and older married men, with at least a minimum age gap of 10 years or more (Bledsoe 1990; Ankomah 1998; Castle and Konaté 1999; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2005). They are often theorized as profoundly asymmetrical, in that the older, usually married male partner has the upper-hand over the naïve young women. In fact, this representation is a bit simplistic as both sides of the exchange have clear agendas. While the older man is ready to provide material compensations/gifts for sexual access and the making of a hopefully lasting intimate relationship that will secure that access, the young woman’s agenda is to provide that access in exchange for material goods and support. Some young women are savvier than others at negotiating their arrangement with their sugar-daddy. Older women might eventually advise a younger one to set up such an arrangement.

While scholars have sought to ensure that the notion of “transactional sex” is not understood as a synonym of prostitution, most, nevertheless, focused their attention on

the instrumentality of the relationships, the mutual search for benefits at the cost of being attentive to the emotional, affective and intimate nature of these cross-generational heterosexual relationships that are always about more than just material exchanges.

“My Pa is very generous to me, he takes care of me and makes me feel special,” said Rohey, a 26 year old bank teller from Serrekunda, in her 20s. She works as a teller in one of the major banks in Banjul. She is a quintessential sugar-baby. She is assertive and knows what she wants. During our conversations, she made me understand what it means to be a sugar-baby. Contrary to the African literature on intergenerational transactional sex, which asserts that young women like Rohey are girls being taken advantage of because they have no negotiating power, Rohey’s life at least for now shows nothing but the contrary (see Bledsoe 1990; Ankomah 1998; Castle and Konaté 1999; Luke 2003). Rohey juggles different men (only men), whom she knows can afford to take care of her and give her what she needs and wants. When I asked her what is it that she needs that these men are able to provide her with, she replied:

“Listen, my job barely pays well (\$100.00 a month), even though I have an education. Most of the men I see are clients at the bank, so I know what amount of money they have in their accounts, so when I ask them for things, I know what they are able to afford or not. So, out of my friendships with these PAs I was able to get a house and a Mercedes Benz all in my name, cell phones, perfumes, clothing, I am able to take a trip to the U.S. and London for holidays and I get an allowance. Trust me, I know my worth and am not foolish!” (Interview April 2015).

It is difficult to see girls like Rohey as victims who have little agency. As a young woman, Rohey knows that older men are interested in her in large part because of her youth and the excitement that comes with it. Living in a society that values virginity, where sexuality is expected to take place in marriage, Rohey understands as much the value of her young body as the risks that comes with loosing one's respectability. So she mitigates these opportunities and risk by making sure that she remains in a position of persisting desirability without endangering her body or becoming economically and socially vulnerable. When asked if her parents know about her *harit*, "friendships" with older men, she responded:

Well, I make sure that no one comes to my house because it would be disrespectful to my parents. I have respect for them and for myself. I want them to see me in a good light

When I asked her how she explains to her parents why she receives so many gifts, she responded that for most of the gifts, they don't realize that these were gifts she received; only when she received the car was she in the obligation to have to answer the question: "I just said that a friend helped me buy it."

Young women like Rohey engage in a number of maneuvers to manage their reputation and respectability. The family is not exposed to their sugar-baby activities: they don't want to run the risk of disappointing their parents, for whom they continue to perform the role of "good" daughters. I can not help but think that it is fair to assume that many of these parents are aware of their daughters' activities, however, they participate in the charade by remaining silent in order to maintain respectability and avoid running the risk of losing their daughter's help. As many of these young women shared with me:

when they leave their houses, they make sure that their outfits are appropriate. They do their prayers before eventually informing their parents that they are going out on the weekend with my female friends. This is the kind of cover that allows them to escape stigmatization, and to instead project a good and respectful self-image towards their family. Their female friends are often also engaged in sugar-baby / sugar-daddy relationships or ‘friendships’. They go out together as friends meeting their older men for dinner; after dinner they often part ways, and meet up later to go back home.

During my fieldwork in Kololi in 2015, I spoke to 12 young women who were involved in sugar-baby / sugar-daddy relationships. Listening to their experiences, I came to the realization that sugar babies are young women who are—in various ways—subverting sociocultural norms and expectations about womanhood. Aware of the high value placed on their bodies and sexualities, these women are daringly engaging in premarital sex with older men. The mostly married men are aware of the risk the young women are taking, so they make sure to provide for them and to contribute to the protection of their “good” girl image by being discreet. As Tijan, a 61 years old businessman told me about his sugar baby:

I know that I am older than her, she is young and beautiful, so her being with me is so special, I have to make sure to honor her by taking care of her. She knows we are not going to get married, so I have to make sure that I don’t do anything to harm her. So if she were to come to me and said that she is getting married tomorrow, I would tell her to get married because she is a woman that deserves to have her own family,” (Interview May 2015)

Many of the scholars who have described these relationships as “transactional sex,” tend to overemphasize the importance of the material exchanges these relationships allow, and their relatively short-term nature, as if this meant that transnational sex does not involve affect (Bledsoe 1990; Ankomah 1998; Castle and Konaté 1999; Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Luke 2005). Indeed, so much of the scholarship on sugar daddy-sugar baby relationships neglect to theorize the ways in which these relationships do not exist in a vacuum. Instead, we should think about them as embedded in a moral economy of exchanges and obligations between partners (see Cole 2010; Hunter 2010; Groes-Green 2014). And any serious examination of this economy ought to consider its emotional dimension, where affection and attachment are exchanged or shared, and which eventually explain why both partners were willing to engage with each other in the first place. When talking about his sugar baby, Tijan shows having a strong emotional bond with her; this bond explains his willingness to take care of her financially and socially as well. Much of the existing literature on sugar-baby- sugar-daddy relationship neglects affect and the eventual emotional bond that often develops in these “friendships.” I very much agree with Amalia Cabezas’ (2009) vocabulary, where the notions of “sex-affective” and “sexual-affective” are used interchangeably to underscore how in these relationships have elements of friendship, romance, sex, and solidarity blend together (Cabezas 2009:170).

When talking with me about her sugar daddy, Isatou—a 24 year old sugar baby—told me: “I really like him, he takes care of me and I take care of him as well!” When asked how she takes care of her sugar-daddy, she explained:

I listen to him, he tells me a lot about his marriage and work, I cook for him sometimes, and when he is feeling down, I put a smile in his face, he told me that I bring happiness to him” (Interview June 2015).

Isatou’s relationship is above and beyond material exchanges. She serves as a confidant to her sugar daddy, she shows him that “she cares for him” as she said, which he values a lot. This is a bond and complicity that they both share that goes beyond just having sex. Isatou feels important, needed and valued in her “friendship” with her sugar daddy. One day, I asked Isatou what she gets from her relationship/friendship with her sugar-daddy. She had this to say:

Yes he takes care of me, I don’t have to worry about my living situation at all. I have land that he is going to help me build. But he also makes me happy because he treats me well. I know that I am getting from him what I will not get in a marriage” (Interviewed June 2015).

Isatou’s last statement was quite interesting, for many of the young women I spoke to expressed the same sentiment: Once you get in a marriage, men do not treat you the same way. So sugar baby-sugar daddy relationships provide sugar babies opportunities to be independent and exercise their own agency, which they would not have if they had entered in marriage. As Liv Haram (2005) eloquently puts it: “in their pursuit for self-fulfilment and economic independence, they become dependent on another type of attachment to men” (Haram 2005). Young Gambian women’s engagement in this kind of relationships/friendships allows them to preserve some level of independence and control, while delaying marriage, which continues to be an option (Haram 2005).

Many of the sugar babies I interviewed expressed that their relationships with older men had been initiated by their older partner, who in the process of their first encounter promised to take care of them “because they deserved to be treated well.” In The Gambia, women generally do not approach men, men are expected to approach women. A woman that approaches a man would be seen as being aggressive or too easy, so a “good” woman is one that is approached not the one doing the approaching.

When I pressed my research participants on what the sugar daddies expected in return of their friendship and support, most usually looked at me with amusement. One of them said “what do you think, what does a man want from a woman, her panties!” Though sex is not the only defining aspect of the relationship, it is part and parcel of it. Sugar babies and their sugar daddies who I interviewed both expressed that with each other they shared sexual excitement and play. For sugar babies, the excitement is explained as coming from the fact that they are able to express themselves sexually and playfully, which provides them with the opportunity to eventually exert power over their sugar daddies. The sugar daddies interviewed explained their excitement by referring to the experience of feeling young again, and the chance to experience a more exciting sexual play with a young “modern” girl who is not docile in bed, and behave as an active and complicit partner.

I propose that scholarship must understand that these relationships provide young women with a new subjectivity, one with which they can assert a certain agency and sexual power otherwise unreachable.

### **Chepehs Looking to Catch a Semester**

*Chepehs* are trendy unmarried modern Gambian girls. They are similar to the *Disquettes* described by Francis B. Nyamnjoh (2005) in “Fishing in Troubled Waters: Disquettes and Thiofs in Dakar,” in which he highlights transactional sex in Dakar, Senegal (Nyamnjoh 2005). Though in The Gambia both *Chepehs* and *Disquettes* are used to describe modern girls, *Disquette* has mostly grown out of fashion, and *Chepeh* is preferred. It is also the term used by Semesters (Gambian diasporic males who mostly live in the UK) to refer to the local girls they engage with. *Chepehs* are “it” girls. They are trendy, beauty-conscious, somewhat educated, fun-loving, enjoy clubbing, and have a knack for Global North consumer tastes. They are girls who wear hair weaves of the Beyoncé type. They dress in the latest clothing fashion seen in fashion magazines and/or hip-hop music videos. They are middle-class or middle-class aspiring young women with family safety nets that may or may not be linked to relatives living in the Global North. A typical *Chepeh* is a girl who went to private school, which was either paid by her parents or by relatives through remittances. She generally finished high school or currently going to school at the University. She is ambitious and dreams to one day migrate to the Global North to further her education or live comfortably in a big house sponsored by her Semester husband young or old. She consumes Global North music and television, while also enjoying “modern” Senegalese Mbalax music and Afrobeats. *Chepehs* take fashion cues from the Global North and from local Senegambian popular music stars such as Viviane Chadid, a Senegalese female artist dubbed the Senegalese Beyoncé who mixes R&B with Mbalax, who spent some time in the US, and sings in Wolof, French and English.

After high school graduation, just like sugar babies do, they usually get jobs as bank tellers and managers, teachers, secretaries, business-women, NGO workers, and receptionists, if they are lucky or have good family connections that provides the required social capital to land a job. From my perspective, these young women could very well end up in a sugar daddy/sugar baby relationship as they could with a Semester. However, I have observed that many Chepehs' main goal is to attract a Semester, get married to him, which would perhaps facilitate her migration to the Global North.

Unlike Sugar babies who generally do not seek or expect their relationships to result in a marriage, Chepehs mainly and purposefully seek relationships with Semesters in hopes of getting a husband. In these relationships/friendships, a few get married and become co-wives to Gambian women living in the Global North. Others are able to migrate to the Global North. Some get to stay in the country and have their Semester husband send them remittances. However, many find themselves single and isolated once their Semester's home visit ends.

During my fieldwork, I began noticing girls who were regularly hanging out in bars and clubs that cater to middle- and upper-class Gambians. In these trendy bars and clubs, these girls come in groups dressed in fashionable outfits, with their make-up all done, wearing long weaves and high heel shoes with name brands purses like Chanel, YSL, etc. They sit together in tables where they order food, drinks (mostly non-alcoholic but some drink wine), and smoke their hookahs. While smoking their hookahs, they dance to the latest hip-hop, R&B, Afrobeat music blasting in the background. The bar/clubs where they like to go mainly play Global North music with occasional popular mbalax songs. During the tourism season, Chepehs go to these bars every weekend,

beginning on Thursday night. As Sohna, a 25 year old Chepeh told me once: “I work hard from Monday to Thursday so that I can enjoy myself on the weekend. Weekends are made for having a good time” (Interview November 2016).

Sohna is a beautiful girl. She looks like a model. She works at a real estate company that sells land and ready-made houses. Her job gets her to meet Semesters who are interested in buying land to build homes for themselves and their family: a Semester’s ultimate goal. Thus far, she has dated two Semesters (from Norway and England). Neither materialized into a marriage. During our conversations, I got to sense Sohna’s disappointment in her relationships with Semesters. She explained that “the Semesters, they approach you as if they are serious and give you hope that they want to be serious with you. However, in the end, most of them just want to play.” In the Gambian sexscape, being approached seriously means that one is ready for a committed relationship, which is expected to result in a marriage. So when Sohna was approached seriously by her two Semesters, she had hoped that a long lasting relationship ending in a marriage would ensue. Male semesters come to The Gambia to visit families, enjoy the homeland, and perhaps engage in a sexual liaison with a local girl. Chepehs—on the other hand—mostly hope for a serious relationship that could bring them husbands.

Sohna explained how she met her semesters. She met the Semester from Norway at one of the trendy local bars called Brazil. She met the semester from England because they were set-up by a girlfriend prior to his arrival in The Gambia. Besides meeting in these trendy bars and clubs, Chepehs and Semesters connect via friends and Facebook. Lisa, a 24 years old bank teller told me that one of her co-workers introduced her to her American Semester, who she began communicating with for about two months prior to

his arrival. Lisa's friend, who was also dating an American Semester, introduced her to her American Semester by exchanging photos on WhatsApp. After viewing each other's photos, they agreed to directly contact one another and began communicating. She said that he was nice and respectful, and very attentive. They would talk or message one another on WhatsApp almost everyday. He would ask for her to send photos of herself and she would oblige. As he was getting ready to visit the country, he asked if she wanted for him to bring her something, and she asked for a perfume, dress and a phone. He brought her the perfume and an iPhone 5.

These types of gift exchanges are very common between Chepehs and Semesters. This is the very way in which these friendships are formed. Upon his arrival, they began going out in bars, clubs and restaurants together as a couple. She would cook for him and visit him at his hotel room, where he was staying. During the course of his stay, he gave her money, paid for their outings, and generally took great care of her. At times she would be accompanied by her friends and cousins, and he would pay for all of their expenses. As a Semester, Lisa's friend is expected to be the provider, for he is coming from the Global North with means unreachable to most people living in The Gambia. In The Gambia, the folklore has it the Semesters are Gambians who have made it. During their visits, they are expected to take care of their families financially by providing the groceries for meals, give money to relatives, and treat family and friends to outings. This is expected from both female and male Semesters, even though male Semesters are expected to do more because of the patriarchal beliefs that men have more means and are expected to be providers.

As Modou, a 38 year old Semester (see picture 1.5 for a typical male semester) from England told me, “I worked two jobs, as a security guard in a grocery store and as a dishwasher in a restaurant, throughout the year I keep a tight budget for my expenses in England: this allows me to afford a trip to The Gambia. This keeps me motivated as I work because I know that I will be enjoying myself when I get back home” (Interview December 2015).

Many Semesters like Modou, as immigrants in their host countries, work in the service industry, which always has jobs that are “easy” to get even if your presence in the host country is not fully documented. Surahata, a 50 years old banker from Minnesota told me: “You can’t come here without making sure that you have enough means and resources. We spend most of our adult life in the States, so you have to have the pride in coming back home with something, otherwise you are looked at as a failure...” (Interview April 2015). Surahata’s sentiment was expressed by all of the Semesters I interacted with, regardless of their gender, class, and age. For them, being a Semester entailed being able to secure Global North-acquired resources, which made them been looked up to by local Gambians. When listening to what is said about the Semesters in The Gambia, one understands that they are both admired and loathed. They are admired for embodying the aspirations of many Gambians whose dreams of having a better life are tied to opportunities to migrate to the Global North to hopefully one day enjoy economic and social prosperity. According to Omar Kebbeh (2016), Semesters are responsible for contributing to the country’s economy through their remittances—estimated at more than \$81.3 million annually for the years 2007 – 2011 (Kebbeh 2016:6). As a Semester from Miami, told to me, “when I go to The Gambia, I spend \$4,100.00 on average in a span of

three weeks” (Interview November 2016). Semesters are known for, and expected to spending a lot during their holidays in The Gambia: December and January every year. Semesters make it a point to spend lavishly and take care of families and friends financially during their stay and afterwards, which brings them adoration. While admired, however, they are also loathed for being obnoxious and “showy” by some local Gambians who have not had the opportunity to travel. This brings a flurry of typecasts to poke fun at Semesters, take for instance this *WhatsOn-Gambia*’s (WOG) article (WOG is a popular entertainment news site that posted an online article about Semesters).



Picture 1.5: Image of Male Semesters, Taken from WOG website, <http://www.whatson-gambia.com/>

The WOG piece was entitled “Are you thinking about dating a Semester this Christmas and New Year holidays? Please read this!”

SEMESTERS FROM USA: Don't be deceived by their fake American accent, most of them work as taxi drivers and babysitters for American pensioners. And the ones that always brag about university degrees—find out more about them. You would be surprised to discover they attended Navarro College in Texas, where even a Grade 5 student from Niamina Dankunku can graduate with *summa cum laude*.

SEMESTERS FROM ITALY and SPAIN: They work as seasonal agricultural workers in remote parts of Spain and Italy. Majority of them live in crowded apartments and they only shower once a week. The main reason why they visit The Gambia is to look for sex because they don't get it where they live. Some of them are porn addicts.

SEMESTERS FROM UK: They are very hard working and some of them attended prestigious universities. But they also have liars and they are the Gambians from other parts of Europe who moved there.

SEMESTERS FROM GERMANY and SWITZERLAND: Most of them are retired drug dealers who sleep on friends' sofas because they don't have their own apartments. Don't be deceived by the photos they show you on their mobile phones.

SEMESTERS FROM SWEDEN: They are serial cheaters and most of them have children in every corner of Sweden - from Kiruna to Malmö. Even Swedish women are scared of Gambian-Swedish men and that's why they stopped getting married to them.

SEMESTERS FROM FINLAND and NORWAY: They are also very hard working. Most of the Gambians in Norway have very decent jobs, not babysitting pensioners like the American semesters (fake nurses).

Wasalam!

(WOG 2017 Website).

This article brought about a lot of posting on WOG's page on Facebook by Semesters and locals. Not surprisingly, the Semesters found the piece to be insulting. Some of them responded that local Gambians should be grateful to Semesters for their hard work. If they are able to send money back home thanks in large part to their ability to clean the behind of pensioners rather than begging, the better. Others simply dismissed the piece by saying that it had been written by fake journalists who don't know what they are writing about, which is the reason why they diminish Semesters' hard work.

What the piece revealed is the underlining tension between local Gambians and Semesters, for the preoccupation of the writers are to show that Semesters are not as successful as local Gambians imagine them to be, and as such, *Chepehs* need to be mindful of their dealings with Semesters for they are untrustworthy. While the responses from the Semesters underscore the fact that they see local Gambians as beggars happy to receive their remittances but who look down on them. The article imagines and depicts Semesters as people who perform social and financial success, when in fact they lack proper education and work in low-wage jobs cleaning other people's houses and doing domestic work. The article's objective is to diminish the Semesters' prestige, in an attempt to convince and deter *Chepehs* from giving into Semesters' seduction tactics. The article also speaks to the kind of jobs that are valued by Gambians with respect to

diaporic Gambians living in the Global North: they measure success by education level reached and by the getting middle class-paying jobs as opposed to working class-jobs. This piece was most likely written by a man who somehow feels threatened by male Semesters who regularly compete with local middle and upper class Gambians on the social scenes, for access to Chepes, particularly. The article also uncovers hierarchies among Semesters. For the most part, Semesters from the U.S. and the U.K are seen as the most successful Semesters. During my fieldwork many of my female research participants expressed their preference to migrating to the U.S. instead of Europe; they would accordingly prefer to engage with a U.S.-based semester.

In an informal discussion with four Chepehs one evening in Serrekunda, while eating *afra*—a local fast food, which consists of a well spiced grilled meat on a woodfire—it was revealed to me that their main desire was to be with an American Semester. When I asked why, they replied loudly as if they were a choir: “America is the place to be, it has everything and people live very well!” They have access to satellite TV, which allows them to watch American TV shows such as “the Kardashians” and “the Real Housewives” franchised. By watching these shows, they envision life in America to be pleasant and filled with opulence. When I told them that America is not as easy as it might seem and that it has its share of problems as well, they all looked at me and said: “It is still better than here, no matter how bad it is it can’t be worse than living here!” This made me pause for a moment for they had a point, no matter what, life opportunities were much more available in the U.S. than in The Gambia, for sure: this is the way of global inequalities. The girls told me that they know that America is not easy and that they have to work hard, however, they envision America to have more opportunities than

Europe and for sure than The Gambia. As one of the girls said, “I’ve been to London once, and I was shocked to see how Gambians were living; I live better here than they do in London.” Another girl said, “Well in America if you work hard you can become successful, get a good education and a job. Most Gambians in Europe get money from the government, so they don’t want to work” (Interview in November 2016). Their vision of the U.S. as a paradise is fueled by Western media and by the Semesters themselves. When they return, Semesters perform and create a sort of narrative about America and the Global North as land of opportunities as opposed to the opportunity-less the Gambia. They do so even if they do struggle a lot in their host countries, where they work as unskilled low wage-workers. However, as diasporic Gambians, they are automatically given an upper class status locally, for they come from the Global North and as such they are assumed to have money even if it is far from being the case.

When I asked the girls how they differentiate between a Semester and a local Gambian, they laughed and said: “Well, their shoes. They are name brand, clean and don’t have a red dart on it; they brandish the latest model cellphone, wear fresh clothing (jeans, polo shirts, watch), smell nice, and speak English well. When they approach you, they do so nicely.” They are able to target their potential Semesters by identifying certain material and social markers that distinguish them from local Gambians. These markers involve material goods that the Semesters wear and possess, which makes them visible and attractive to the Chepehs.

Another important thing that makes the Semesters different from local Gambian men is the way they are said to approach local girls. Kalatou, a 28 year-old unemployed Chepeh, said that: When a Semester comes to talk to you, they are nice, they want to have

a conversation with you, they are attentive, and care about you.” She went on to say that with her last Semester, a 37 year-old from America, while they were out late one night she was feeling a little cold, so he took his jacket and wrapped it around her, which she found to be such a nice gesture (Interviewed December 2015).

For Kalatou, the fact that her Semester friend demonstrated such chivalry made him more attractive because—in her opinion—local Gambian men are not that thoughtful. One observation I came away with is that many of the Chepehs fantasize about their relationships with the Semesters as being romantic relationships. It all happens as if Semesters were placed in a liminal space, outside local gender, social and sexual norms. As Ala, a 26 years old Semester from Sweden told me: “We are a new kind of Gambian men, because of our exposure to living in Europe we understand better how to treat a women” (Interviewed November 2016). Ala is echoing Kalatou’s idea of Semesters being more affectionate than local Gambian males. From my observations during fieldwork, though, the Semesters tended to be seen as more generous and attentive to girls, which is I think is due in great part to their liminality. That is, when Semesters come back to the homeland, they come with the energy and expectation to relax and have fun as they planned it throughout the year, and they found themselves in a very different situation than where their local male counterpart find themselves as they have to continue dealing with the reality of their everyday lives. Unlike local Gambians, who are constrained by socio-religious norms of gender and sexuality, the Semesters’ liminal position allows them to subvert and bypass these constraints. This allows them to project the best picture of themselves because once they leave and go back to their host country, they don’t have to deal with these “friendships” fallout.

The Semesters usually approach local Gambian girls as if they wanted to engage in a serious relationship that could possibly lead to a marriage. This is a strategy they use to get the girls to sleep with them. As Semesters, they are fully aware of Gambian socio-sexual mores that demand that sex take place in the context of marriage. Putting the idea of marriage in a suitor's mind allows them to manipulate courtship in a way that often leads to a sexual liaison. So many of the Chepehs engage in sexual liaisons expecting that this will link a man to them, and get them a husband. The thing is that most of the Semesters only come back to have a good time for a while before returning to their host countries. What I have discovered is that the Semesters who marry local girls generally had previous relationships with them either before or after arriving in their host nations. Though it happens that couples genuinely meet and get married during a Semester's visit, the majority of marriages between Semesters and local girls happen because the couples were already in a serious relationship, or because a relationship emerged following a set-up by the two families that introduced the two parties to each other, which is also very common in The Gambia.

Many male Semesters visit The Gambia to see their families and have a good time. Their idea of a good time comes with having access to as many girls as possible, and sleeping with them during their visits. They don't mind spending the money they have saved as long as they have fun with a pretty and young local young woman or two at their arms. Musa, a 34 year old male Semester from the UK once told to me: "Boy, the Chepehs are always ready, just take them out to a restaurant and buy them pizza or fried chicken and you get them!" (Interview November 2016). As I listened to Musa's

speaking, I was shocked and surprised by his cavalierly disrespectful attitude toward the Chepehs. After I pressed him on his objectification of the Chepehs, he added:

There are many ‘good’ girls with good ‘morals’ among the Chepehs, but many of the local girls you meet in the clubs and bars are girls you want to have fun with because they’re only interested in our money, they are not serious!” (Interview November 2016).

Musa’s statement reveals the disconnect between Chepehs and Semesters in that, while the Chepehs are mainly interested in finding a serious relationship that can eventually lead to marriage, the Semesters on the other hand are mostly interested in having a “good time.”

My fieldwork allowed me to witness how much male Semesters openly discuss their sexual conquests with their friends. This is so mostly for the younger Semesters; the older Semesters tend to be more discreet. Some even shared videos and nude pictures of the women they slept with with their friends. Some of the male Semesters I interviewed were married with families in their host country. They shared the reservations of their wives to let them travel alone to the homeland knowing that their husbands would most certainly be chased by younger women, if their husbands didn’t chase them first. My interviews with female Semesters, which I discuss in Chapter 4, illuminated the fact that many female Semesters resented local Gambian girls for trying to take their husbands away by “cheapening” themselves. Even if a marriage occurs between a local girl and a Semester, the local girl often finds it difficult to migrate because of the restrictions of legal immigration. Hence, many of these marriages end in divorce, and very few actually end in transnational migration for the Chepehs. Chepehs-Semesters relationships

constitute an important aspect of the sexscape, for these relationships reveal—as much as the socio-sexual scripts that make the tourism-based sexual economy do—the impressive desire to emigrate: for young people, emigration is more often than not the only avenue to self-improvement. In fact, I have often wondered if the young women who engage with Global North male tourists have not first tried their chance with Semesters.

### **Gambian Women and their Toubab Friends: Postcolonial Interracial Intimacy**

This section heeds the call by Kamala Kempadoo (2007) for women of color/scholars to use transnational feminist and postcolonial frameworks to study sex work. Kempadoo explains that a transnational feminist approach helps one “explore histories and contemporary meaning of black and brown women’s sexuality” with respect to issues of racism, colonialism, gendered relations of power, and globalization (Kempadoo 2001:42). Kempadoo further adds that a transnational feminist approach to sex work also comes with “a rethinking of practical strategies and programs to address the specific situations in which women of color in the global sex trade are embedded (Kempadoo 2001:43). The Gambian women I focus on here are economically and socially disadvantaged, with minimal labor skills. Most of the time, they are women with children who have lived in the margins of society. They engaged in sex work with tourists as a strategy to materially improve their lives and the lives of their relatives (children and parents).

Most of the women who engage in this script had no formal education beyond Koranic school. A few finished primary school, and/or were involved in petty trading, selling local juices, second hand clothing, or pepper sauce to passers-by. They go to bars and restaurants that cater to tourists in the Senegambia strip and that are often owned by

English expats. They often bear English names and the music played seems to be stuck in the 1980s: most of the songs played are 1980s' pop songs by Lionel Richie, UB40, Bob Marley, etc.

The atmospheres in these bars is designed to give the impression to patrons that they are participating in a big party, where race, nationality, and gender are as many tools at one's disposal to entice the opposite sex. White Global North patrons enter these bars expecting to pick up a Gambian or West African woman who will hopefully fulfill their racial erotic fantasies. Both Gambians and Global North tourists identify these bars as spaces where local women hang out to meet white tourists to have sex, even though—as I explain below—Global North tourists might behave as if they didn't know. Virtually every adult in that part of The Gambia knows about these bars, even those who might have recommended to tourists to go there. While the local female sex workers admittedly go to these bars with the intent of meeting a *toubab*, I found that during my interviews the tourists, however, often behaved as if these were regular bars where they came to listen to music and have some drinks and where they happened to pick up a date. I couldn't help but to recognize what someone would say in the US after meeting someone in a bar that is not reserved for sex tourism. This denial of the existence of a tourism-based sexual economy should be related to the tourists' desire to have as “authentic” experiences as possible (Kempadoo 2001; Jeffereys 2003; Sanchez-Taylor 2001). My deambulations at night for fieldwork revealed that tourists do not frequent the bars-restaurants that cater to the middle-class Gambians (including the Semesters) mentioned above. If by chance a tourist ends up in one of those bars, he immediately feels out of place because he is rejected by the women who are exclusively interested in male Semesters.

In the bars that cater to tourists, white men behave like kings. They have all the attention of local Gambians and other West African women looking to pick up a toubab. Global North tourists feel very comfortable hanging and drinking in these bars on their own or in a group. As a UK pilot for one of the charter company that brings UK tourists to The Gambia told me while pointing at a group of British men:

Look it is great to see these guys having fun and feeling important, because most of them are taxi drivers, garbage men, they save their meager income in order to have vacations away from the cold. They make very little, but when they come here they feel really good and deserving, and nothing should be wrong with that.

(Interviewed December 2015)

The Pilot's statement is revealing because it confirms that many of the Global North tourists who vacation in The Gambia are working class men and women more so than upper-tier tourists. Though economically marginalized in England and in any other Western European country they come from, when they arrive in The Gambia, their treatment as Global North tourists affords them privileges that they couldn't dream of receiving in their home countries. When they meet Gambian and West African women in these bars-restaurants who look up to them because they assume them to be financially wealthy due to their whiteness, they have access to their racialized bodies with an ease they are not use to experiencing in their home countries.

Khadijatou, a young Gambian woman, told me:

I was with a Gambian man for six years, I had a child with him, when he went to London he promised that we were going to get married and that he would send (money) for me, after six years of waiting for him, he told me that he couldn't

marry a chaga, that I have illnesses, etc. I then realized that I was on my own, and my major worries were how I was going to help my child survive and live a good life, without the help of her father” (Interviewed June 2010).

Unlike the previous scripts (sugar babies-sugar daddies relationships, and Chepehs-Semesters relationships) highlighted in the previous sections of this chapter, which involve women who are able to rely on their families for relative safety nets, the women involved in this script don’t enjoy the same relative safety net to fall back on and are more “on their own,” with dependents who rely on them as providers, which brought them to work informally in the tourism industry by providing sexual services to Global North tourists. In their endeavors, they experience hardships, both periods of happiness and of sadness, and keep the hope that their economic conditions will improve thanks to their “friendship” with a Global North male tourist.

The women I foreground in this section—and this is probably true for all of the women discussed in this dissertation, be they involved in the tourism-based sexual economy or not—have had experiences imbued with fluctuating situations, and contradictions that suggest both agency and vulnerability on gender, race, sexuality based on power relations. “power” or *prérogative* of intervention alongside gender-based, sexually-based, and racially-based abuse.

All women referred to in this section or script use strategic sex in a myriad of ways in their relationships with men. Their socio-sexual understanding of their relationships with men involves a constitutive component of monetary and sexual-affective exchanges (Cabezas 2009). I call these women “sex workers,” not so much because of their sexual interactions with white male tourists but because the expression

provides a useful analytical tool to frame “what they do” in the tourism industry: engage in “strategic sexual-affective exchanges” with tourists (Cabezas 2009:117). One of the women discussed in this section who I spent time with, Olé, shared in an assertive manner during a group discussion a sentiment that was shared by all other women: “in these days, the notion of prostitute doesn’t exist. Taking care of your business is what matters!” (Interview June 2012). I use the expression “sex worker” because that is a term that the women identified with. They preferred it to “prostitute,” which they found moralizing and stigmatizing. In their self-consciousness, they tied their subjectivity as sex workers to the fact that they are working to survive not only for themselves but for their families as well. They perform a kind of work that should not be looked down upon, nor carry any stigmatization in this abjectly poor society.

The women whose experiences are highlighted in this section at times referred to their relationships with male tourists as “work” and as “friendship” at other times. Their use of the notion of friendship to characterize what they do with the tourists is no accident, for it is a way to minimize the stigma that comes with other ways of naming what they do. The use of “friendship” is also justified by the fact that Gambian women usually claim a man as their own once he is their husband. If he isn’t, he is simply your “friend,” meaning that you know the guy you are talking to, following the mores of the Gambian socio-sexual understanding of heterosexual relationships.

I first met Khadijatou in 2010, at the apartment complex where I was staying. I noticed the beautiful young Gambian woman coming and going over the first days of my stay that year. I, of course, noticed that she was hanging out with a much older white male tourist from Austria who was staying in one of the apartments of the complex. One

day, I approached her and told her about my project and asked if she would mind if I interviewed her. She hesitated before giving me her phone number so that we could talk one day. She asked me where I was from; I replied that I was from Kanifing (not too far away from where we were), but that I currently live in Miami, USA. She asked me to follow her to the apartment because her friend is waiting for her upstairs. She was carrying a bowl of food that she cooked for him. I followed her to the apartment. As I entered, her friend was sitting on the sofa with no shirt on while smoking a cigarette. She introduced me to him as her friend, he smiled and said hello. He then moved to the dining table towards the bowl of food. He opened the bowl and said: "Delicious!" He looked at me and asked if I wanted to eat. I kindly declined and wished that he enjoyed his meal. He responded something else, which I didn't understand. That's when Khadijatou smiled and moved towards me to exchange our contact information. I asked Khadijatou what he said to me in Wolof. She responded: "He thinks that you are looking for a friend as well." After we exchanged cell numbers, she asked me to call her the day after. The following day came and I called, but she did not answer my call. However, the next day she called and said that she was busy but that she would be able to meet with me once her friend leaves town. I replied that no, it was okay with me, and invited her to call me when available. After a week, she called me back and indicated that she would be available to meet with me that afternoon. She also asked if I would mind if she brought two girlfriends who are in the same game. I happily accepted, enthusiastic to have more than one woman to interview.

That evening at around 5:00 pm, Khadijatou came with her two girlfriends, Ole and Tamara. I offered them drinks and we sat on my apartment's sofa. Tamara, who just

began her locs, asked if mine were real. She said that mine looked really nice. I thanked her and replied that hers are also nice and that if she continued growing them they would be lovely as well. Khadijatou and Ole smiled. Khadijatou introduced me to her friend as her student acquaintance from America. She explained that I was doing work on women like them, and that is why they came here after accepting to meet with me. Tamara smiled but Ole was expression-less and silent. I added that I was grateful to Khadijatou and them for giving me the opportunity to talk openly about their lived experiences, and that my intentions were to learn from their experiences in the trade. As a Gambian female I am very much aware of the importance of the practice of not telling your business to people, especially with respect to issues of sexuality. This is why it was important for me to give them assurance that whatever we discussed, their true identities will never be revealed in my writing because I will give them pseudonyms and that the information will not be used to harm them in any way. They gave me the names I am using here to refer to them.

All three women were mothers. They each had children with Gambian men who had left them. In a country with no social welfare programs to help the economically disadvantaged, especially single mothers, the loss of a spouse can provoke catastrophic consequences. Indeed, many women find themselves as the main and only breadwinners for their families. In cases of divorce, women are often left to take care of their children, and there are little to no prospects of getting child support from the former spouse. So child rearing, both socially and economically, is left on the backs of women. I now want to highlight the lived experiences of some of these women, the lived experiences of Gambian and other West African (Senegaleses, Liberians, Sierra Leoneans, Guineans, Nigerians, and Ghanaians) female sex workers in The Gambia , who are actively engaged

in the Gambian sexscape. West African female sex workers' experiences are at times slightly different from the same experiences by Gambian sex workers due in large part to the status of migrants of the former; some have little or no legal immigration status, which further increases their fragility and risks of abuse by the police force. Even though The Gambia has a long-standing history of welcoming foreigners, especially from neighboring countries, many members of the security forces—due in part to their low wages—target and prey on these women.

Many of the Gambian female sex workers who participated in my study began on their own, others because a friend introduced them to the trade, and a few because a male partner encouraged them to come to the Senegambia strip and try “their luck,” as they say. As aptly argued by Brad Weiss (2004), in neoliberal Africa young people apply metaphors of luck and hope that cover over widespread anxieties (Weiss 2004). The notion of luck is very important because it brings hope to many female and male Gambian sex workers in their intimate encounters with Global North tourists. This notion of luck is important as the sex work in focus in this section has nothing to do with commercial sex work, where the sex work is negotiated and a price set for specific interactional services to be rendered. The sex work that characterizes the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy is one based on cultivating “friendships” between local women and male tourists, where gifts are made by the Global North tourist in many different forms following or not sexual services to the local woman: everything is left to the discretion of the Global North tourists. Hence, for many of these sex workers, success comes with being lucky at finding a “generous” global north tourist willing to take care of their financial, intimate, and migratory needs.

Gambian and West African female sex workers are generally women from economically disadvantaged families. They go to the bars/restaurants in groups or by themselves, dressed in Western clothing bought from the many second-hand clothing joints at local markets. In typical Senegambian and African forms of women's socialization, they share and exchange clothing to help each other. They sometimes live together, so that they can join forces and resources to organize the care of their respective children, make food to eat, and support each other with the many little details and challenges of everyday life.

These women generally remain away from their respective families, so they work to cultivate quasi-fictive kinship with women who are in the same line of work as they are, so to speak, which constitute a source of support in the best case scenario, or misery when these relationships go wrong. They came from rural and urban areas in The Gambia, and from neighboring countries to work as waitresses, barmaids, sellers at the beach or at the tourist market, masseuses on the beach, and or simply hanging out at the bars and restaurants in the Senegambia strip at night. Though they may not have a lot of material possessions, they find ways to cultivate what is considered to be attractive bodily appearances to draw the attention of Global North tourists.

One day, I had the opportunity to meet Salimata, a 25 year-old Gambian woman with two children (a third one deceased as a baby). She married at the age of 18 with her primary school boyfriend. He ended up treating her badly, was intimate with other women, and abused her verbally and mentally. The straw that broke the camel's back fell when her husband blamed her for the death of their son. With the "support" of her own father, she got the courage to leave her husband. During our second conversation, she

cried effusively remembering this period of her life. This is when we interrupted the conversation, I stood up and embraced her with emotion; as mother myself, I couldn't imagine the pain that weights heavy on her heart for losing a child first, and then being accused of being responsible for it. We remained silent for a little bit. After about three minutes she said that she wanted to continue and added: "I must continue because this is the first time I am talking about this in full details like this and I want to go on without stopping" (Interview December 2016).

Salimata's sense of being a failure left her broken: in Gambian society, divorces are seen as the personal failures of some women's inability to be good wives. Her status as a divorcee left her the sole responsibility to take care of her remaining two children. At first, she was helped by her father, who had very little to offer to begin with. At some point, some of her friends encouraged her to come out to the Senegambia strip, and have a little enjoyment. One day, while out with her friends, at a live music bar, a white tourist approached her. She hesitated before accepting the advance, but she was encouraged to talk to the man by her friends. After the man made several attempts that night to talk to her, she finally accepted to talk to him. He bought her a fruit cocktail, and then they began chatting. He proposed several times to come back with him to his hotel. She refused. He gave up. Towards the end of the night, the same man came to her and told her that she was an innocent girl before giving her D2,000 to help with her children. She couldn't believe it, and was very appreciative of his generosity. This served as the catalyst for her to go back to the Senegambia with friends to befriend tourists and hopefully "receive gifts" from them.

Ruth—another young woman who illustrate well the script under discussion—is Liberian. She came to The Gambia at the age of 13 with her fiancé. He brought her to The Gambia where she got pregnant at the age of 14. After the birth of their child, he started to mistreat her. They were barely able to pay rent at D300.00 (\$7.50), and have enough to eat. Encouraged by his fellow Liberian nationals to tell her to hustle for the family, he approached Ruth to go out to the Senegambia and look for a white man. She was disgusted at the suggestion that her fiancé would encourage her to go sleep with other men and come back home to him. Later on in their relationship, after she had been doing this once in a while, if he needed money and saw her sleeping at home, he would wake her up to go work for them. One day, she told him that she wanted to go back to Liberia. He told her to go work to get the money necessary to go back home. Embarrassed by her situation and not wanting to contact her family in Liberia to tell them about her situation in The Gambia, Ruth remained silent—as she explained. She sought help from a fellow Liberian female friend, who was known by her husband as well. Her friend then convinced her to go out that night as she also needed money. She then decided to go out with her friend. Once in the bar, when her friend saw her there just sitting, she came and told her to get up and show her shape to the people in the bar and not be shy. This is how began her entry into sex work. She now goes out and makes money in bars, while her fiancé stays home doing nothing. Angry and disappointed by him, one day she left him as she just couldn't bear anymore the thought that her almost-husband was sending her to sleep with men for money, and then taking the money from her. She took her daughter and left.

Mame Jarra is a 28 years old Gambian woman who works at the beach as a masseuse. She came to the beach to find work after the death of her father and the subsequent erosion of her small safety net, as she was left to fend for the family.

Some of the women I interviewed said that they started at the beach doing massages and giving “happy endings” to tourists. The “happy ending” comes with the tourists getting a hand job performed on them to ejaculation. The regular price for a happy ending massage in 2015 was D1,500.00 (\$33.00) to get a massage while at the beach. From the young Gambian woman’s perspective, the “happy ending” could result in being invited by the tourist to hang out later on, or at least receive a generous tip.

Other young women who also went to the beach to find their chances work instead as waitresses or hostesses (the young women who stay on the beach to bring in tourists) in bars and restaurants. They would even accept to take up such jobs without getting paid because their payment comes in the form of tips from both tourists and bar and restaurant owners (European and Lebanese expats) for bringing in customers. They accept such work conditions to get access to tourists and because they have no other opportunity to find a good job in the tourism industry.

Many women talked of “good” and “bad” toubabs or “holiday makers.” I use this emic terminology in the following pages.

Halima, a 25 year-old single mother, once told me: “the good toubab is the toubab that is generous with gifts. He’s nice, has patience, and is gentle in bed” (Interview December 2016). And when I first met Khadijatou in 2010, she explained:

Well, at least the toubabs are willing to help us. The reason why I am doing well, is because of the toubabs. The toubab I have right now, he helps me out a lot, he

helps me take care of my child's school fees and everything else I need.”

(Interview June 2012)

The help Khadijatou gets from her toubab friends allows her to take care of herself and her three children. This also allowed her to start a small business that enables her to go to Senegal every so often to buy garments that she sells in The Gambia, which brings her an extra income and a sense of financial stability. Salimata, the 25 years old mother of two I introduced earlier, is also currently involved with an older toubab from the UK, whom she met in one of the bars. Her UK toubab is helping her by sending her money to take care of herself and the kids. The money he sends her covers her rent, the food, and the kids' school fees.

Having a “good toubab” allows these women to fulfill their social and economic obligations. This relative financial “comfort” solidifies the relationships they have with their “good” toubabs. This in turn makes for sustained financial support from the toubab, allowing an eventual interruption of sex work when times are good, until he stops sending money, taking away that safety net. At times, they speak of loyalty towards their toubabs, particularly when he is good in sending remittances and maintaining the friendship at long distance.

Amie, a 32 years old Guinean mother was very proud to say that she was engaged to an older toubab from Denmark (he was 62 years old at the time). He sends money for her and her daughter. She hopes to get married to him. He was due to visit her in December 2017; he had to delay his travel plans due to the political crisis provoked by Yahya Jammeh's refusal to acknowledge his defeat at the presidential election. Amie said

that she had stopped sex work for now because she wanted to be faithful to him and not jeopardize the friendship.

Through their work, women get to experience the generosity of the Global North tourists male who, while seeking to fulfill their intimate sexual fantasies, are also able to show kindness and care during their vacation, and even afterward. The fact that the Global North tourists are able to provide them with gifts and help with their children signaled an affirmation of friendships and care for their well-being. This level of care nurtures the hope for a lasting relationship with their toubabs, in the position of husband. Once the toubabs are no longer willing to help them out, they go back to square one.

Lisa, a 23 years old mother of one told me, “We go with these toubabs because of property, the nice ones will treat you good, so each time you go out, you hope to meet a nice one but many times you meet bad ones that are no good, so it’s a matter of luck” (Interview December 2016).

Lisa’s statements echo what many other women say: working the tourism-based sexual economy is not at all easy, and one is lucky when finding a “good toubab,” and keeping him involved is their goal. Many of these women serve as pseudo-wives to their foreign partners: they often cook for them, do their laundry, and serve as companion – all to make their time in The Gambia special.

A British man in his late 50s once told me, “I come to The Gambia because the women here treat you like a man, you feel wanted and needed, which I don’t get in the UK, because the women there are so busy being one up over a man, you know what I mean?” (Interview June 2015).

The sentiment of this British tourist is not at all surprising, for it has been documented elsewhere by scholars on sex tourism in the Caribbean and Thailand (see for example Kempadoo 1999 and 2004; Davidson 1998; Davidson and Taylor 1999; Truong 1983 and 1990). His very participation in a tourism-based sexual economy allows him to re-assert his supposed “lost power” as a man in the UK, without at all reflecting about his positionality as a white man who enjoys traveling far away to use his “economic power” in order to enjoy a younger black woman’s body and be “treated nicely” by her. This British tourist’s sentiment recalls a neocolonial discourse and anti-feminist discourse where “difficult” Global North women contrast with the soft and submissive Global South women, the “Other women” who are less demanding, more malleable, and preoccupied with pleasing men like him. These men are able to feel good and reassert their masculinity by using their relative wealth and serving—for a short period of time—as the provider with their Gambian female friend. Embodying the socio-sexual script informing the heterosexual relationships between men and women in The Gambia, the local sex workers cater to the demands of these Global North men by performing the docile, easy-going, and sexually available local African woman. This is a stereotype that Gambian and other West African female sex workers are very much aware of and have performed many times. While white male Global North tourists racially imagine the Gambian women they meet as being “nice,” “sexually available and enticing,” and easy-to-deal-with women, Gambian and other West African women, at the same time, expect them to be good, generous, and willing to take care of them. Very often, when they first begin sex work, young women put local Gambian men down by saying that they are not good men, and that they lack resources, are abusive and rough, and unable to take care of

their responsibilities. Such a posture obviously negates the virulence of the harsh economic realities of the country, which render most men incapable of meeting their social responsibilities.

The “good” male toubab-Gambian women friendships in the tourism-based sexual economy are few and far between. Many of the “good” toubabs tend to be first time sex-tourists. Such a relationship with a brand new sex tourist toubab is infused with the feeling of living a “true relationship” in which sex work is not involved, giving place instead to a sexual-affective relationship based on mutual, respectful dependency among equals. To have successful vacations in The Gambia, Global north tourists need the safety net of a local person able to serve as a cultural broker in the public places by helping open the doors to local spaces and generally serve as a guide. If that cultural broker can also fulfill their racial-sexual fantasies, “why not?” For their part, Gambian women, seek the opportunity to develop a friendship that will provide economic opportunities, intimacy and global mobility. Friendship with a good toubab is what they want.

According to the Gambian women who fit this socio-sexual script, “holiday-makers” are male tourists who come to The Gambia to simply have fun. They are the kind of tourists who want to have excursions and have a sexual encounter with a local woman as part of their vacation experience, the experience of an exotic “girlfriend.” As Amie noted:

You see, the toubabs who we call the holiday-makers, they come and say that they fancy you, so they ask you if you could be with them while they are here, they treat you good.

Amie is talking about the kind of tourists who most of the women speak of with disappointment because they a false sense of hope about continuing the friendship. When they get back home, they stop communicating. Holiday-makers are known to take their Gambian female friends out to nice restaurants, buy them clothing or a cell phone if they need it, bring them to the grocery stores to buy food, and take care of other needs. The nice guy that a girl can fall in love with quickly, so to speak.

Another kind of Holiday-makers are the foreign black tourists coming mostly from the UK: they are unpopular among the women who talk about them, referring first to their giving false hope about wanting to have a serious relationships with an “African sister.” As Salimata said, “The black tourists are the worse because they tell us we should not date the toubabs because they are exploiting us and all kinds of bullshit. However, they give you this false hope that they want to marry you but it is all a lie!” (Interview December 2016)

The women see Global North black guys as provoking the most disappointment because they come exhibiting the politics of pan-Africanism, with “brothers” and “sisters” here and there. However, most of the time, they give little but expect a lot in that they want to be treated like a King “without having a King’s money.” Since most of these women do not charge per sexual intercourse, they run the risk of not getting much from them. Olé, a Gambian woman, told me the story of a guy from the UK who after spending three weeks with her, left her when leaving with only £30.00. He said that upon his return he would send her money and talk more about their plan to consider marriage. However, once he left, he stopped answering her calls, and the phone number at some point simply stopped working. The women say that holiday-makers are fakers, in that

they are just here to have a good time and give you false hope about a future that will never happen. Sometimes, even if they come back to The Gambia, they pretend that they don't know them and move on to the next girl, which can be so hurtful.

The "bad" toubabs are the quintessential sex tourists. As Olé aptly said, "The European, the American, they are all fucked-up (excuse me). They come here and they think they can give you a hundred dalasi and a drink, and then sleep with you" (Interviewed June 2012). These toubabs are usually experienced tourists who have visited the country several times and/or other destinations known for their tourism-based sexual economy. They are known as toubabs that sleep with a lot of girls during their vacation while giving them very little in the end. During my periods of fieldwork, I stayed in an apartment complex that often houses tourists. There, when hanging out around the pool or on the small terrace of my small townhouse, I often saw male tourists with five or more different women during the course of their two week-vacations. Sometimes on the same day, they will have two different women, they leave during the day with one, and return home at night with another. As Amina, a Gambian woman, said, "The bad toubabs are those who are nice in public view, they approach you nicely and politely. However, behind closed doors they are very nasty, they want to do all kinds of things to you. I asked her what she meant by "nasty things and all kinds of things." She paused and added, "Well, they want to have sex with you as if you are a goat, they want to take you in all positions, force their penis in you mouth, call you bad names, they don't treat you like a person."

Amina, who is in her late 40s early 50s and a mother of two, was the oldest female sex worker I interviewed. She is originally from Freetown, Sierra Leone, but she has had

families ties in The Gambia. Fleeing the 1990s wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, she ended up doing sex work in Ghana as a refugee. Thanks to a Church fundraising, she arrived in The Gambia to join her father in what she called Bathurst, the old colonial name for Banjul, the capital of The Gambia. Life with her father quickly turned into hell because of his abusive personality. Left with no other choice but to get out of her father's house, she ended up in Kololi, sleeping on the beach with beach boys who spent time hustling in the Senegambia area. As an experienced sex worker and a self-professed alcoholic, Amina said that she doesn't like men: she does this kind of work because she needs the money. I was at first surprised by her comment that she doesn't like men because each time I had brought about the question of whether the Gambian and other West African women I interviewed also have female tourist "friends" to share intimacy with, they often looked at me with confusion and/or responded with an empathic: "No!, we are Muslims, we don't do that!" Hence, Amina's response intrigued me. I asked Amina if the distaste for men meant that she liked women. She responded positively, adding, "But I don't find one that likes me; I never had relations with a woman but I know I like them!" Following her lead, we moved on, continuing to talk about the "bad" toubabs she had come across. Another woman, Tamara, once told me about "bad toubabs":

Toubabs are not easy to handle. They see you as a bitch, so they sometimes, treat you like one; So it's hard to live or be with them. So you try your best to deal with them" (Interview June 2016).

Tamara speaks not only to the ways in which "bad" toubabs see and treat Gambian female sex workers, but the ways in which female sex workers manage to

maintain these friendships going even if they find them perturbing. Besides fear of violent encounters, which could result in the sex worker being arrested and detained, many of the female sex workers spoke of fear of being videotaped without their knowledge or consent while having sex. “The toubabs are rough, and sometimes they videotape you and it ends up all over the world on the Internet” (Haja, interview November 2016). Other women made reference to the fact that when these bad toubabs go back to Europe with the videos, they sell them for a profit.

On December 2015, while having lunch with Khadijatou, she decided to show me a porn video she accessed through her cell phone. This was the most disturbing video. It showed a young looking Gambian girl who was being sexually penetrated from behind by an old white man, while she was also made to perform oral sex on another white man. Tears were rolling down her face. The scene was videotaped by a third man who remained in the background insulting her for being a prostitute. Khadijatou told me that at the time, the video was circulating everywhere in town, that it had provoked a flurry of discussions centered on the moral decay of the country provoked by tourism. Many voiced their outrage in light of the ease with which white sexual predators could visit The Gambia, rent an apartment in the TDA, and move ahead with their plan to sexually exploit young Gambian girls who suffered from poverty. When and where the video was shot remained unknown, but most people who viewed it were sure that the girl was Gambian. On a following Friday, a local radio station opened the discussion of the video during one of its regular shows that asks for audience input. Those who called in to voice their opinions were split between the callers who blamed the tourism industry, and the callers who blamed the girl for putting herself in such a situation. I particularly

remember a male caller who said: “the blame should be in the girl because she loves money, but she doesn’t love her own private parts!”

Khadijatou, who looked disturbed as well by the video said:

Nowadays, the girls are getting younger and younger. When you see them in the Senegambia, they look like children, but the tourists like them. And they are experienced already!

As my fieldwork for the writing of this dissertation spans seven years from 2010 to 2017, I can share the observation that indeed the girls who go in the bars around the TDA are getting younger and younger. Some look as young as 15 years old. I have even witnessed primary school girls in their school uniform in groups walking about the beach, hoping to be called by a male tourist. Many young people are indeed vulnerable to predatory behaviors by Global North tourists. This was of course a source of profound disgust and frustration in the field, especially when considering the fact that the government has not been dealing with the wider issue of women’s disempowerment and economic vulnerability: the Jammeh regime and the tourism industry in general reproduce a discourse that is almost exclusively focused on child sex trafficking and child sex predators and that remains mostly silent about adult female sex workers. This silence gives the state and security forces the license to harass and abuse them, despite the fact that it is within their rights to practice sex work, a kind of work that is not at all illegal in The Gambia. Thanh-Dam Truong, for example—in her study on the sex work in Thailand—explains that while the tourism industry operates in a well-organized financial and legal framework, sexual services are—on the contrary—“produced on the edge of legal ambiguity” (Truong 1990:180). In fact one of the major concerns expressed to me

by officials from the Gambian Tourism Board (GTB) is that they are working diligently to not have The Gambia known as a sex tourism destination, as Thailand is. Considering this disposition of the GTB, I have been surprised by the contents of many GTB tourism advertisement materials that use images of Gambian women dressed in ethnic clothing smiling generously above one of the often repeated slogan that reads “Welcoming you to The Smiling Coast of Africa” (Gambia Tourism Board). These images suggesting Gambian women availability to tourists do nothing to prevent or destroy a reputation as a sex tourism destination.

The circulation of these images provoke negative descriptions of Gambian women, as the female sex workers were quick to point out to me. In many of the tourists’ blogs and discussion boards online, Gambian men and women are portrayed as hustlers who have sex with tourists for money. They are depicted as people who take advantage of gullible white tourists looking to find “authentic love.” I cannot resist the mention of a blog entitled “Sex in Africa 101, the No.1 Travel Blog for Men” led by the blogger Naughty Nomad<sup>12</sup>. The man behind that nickname seems to be a white man who writes for white global north men. Naughty Nomad presents himself as an experienced traveller in West Africa. He claims to have had several women during his travels and to never have paid for sex, while West African men who want sex would have to pay for it. Besides reproducing stereotypes about Africa filled with bribery, corruption, violence, poverty and lack of infrastructure (“Africa is not for pussies”), Naughty Nomad goes on

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<sup>12</sup> The Naughty Nomad is an online blog written by Mark Zolo, an Irish travel blogger and author. As he wrote on his website, his travel blog and books “keep it real and that it should be think of as the Lonely Planet with the sex, drugs, and rock’n’roll; <http://naughtynomad.com/africa/>.

to give advice to those daredevil white male hunters on things to consider when travelling to Sub-Saharan Africa with regards to sex: 1) African women have the best bodies in the world, and the reader must take his word for it because Nomad has travelled to over 80 countries and slept with women from over 50 countries; 2) Most sexual relationships in sub-Saharan Africa are transactional, as he goes on to say: “it is the rule not the exception”; 3) “On average, 90% of the women you meet at night are prostitutes, who are pros and semi-pros (similar to parts of southeast Asia and Latin America)”; 4) “Be wary of one night stands, sub-Saharan Africa is easily one of the most promiscuous places on the planet”; 5) “HIV and AIDS,” though as he says, “rates aren’t that high, but you will likely be sleeping with the virus’s core demographic” (2016:2-3)

Naughty Nomad ends one of his postings by saying:

“It might sound like rough territory, but I LOVE Africa and would recommend it over any continent; for you can still find plenty of smart, beautiful, caring and incredible women, perhaps even the mother of your children; forget what you’ve heard, experience the reality; This is Africa my friends, welcome to the last frontier, Go” (Naughty Nomad 2016:3).

For Naughty Nomad, the most dangerous thing about Africa is not war or corruption, but women. His blogs, similarly to most of the blogs I have read, reproduce colonial narratives about Africa and its women and speaks to a kind of masculinity that evokes nothing but colonial times: “the great white hunter” who fundamentally belittles men of the continent by speaking to their inability to conquer their own women. Nomad’s postings also highlight the ignorance of European and American men about Africa and

Africans. Take for example Olé's statement about her concerns for not being mistaken as a cheap girl:

Most of the women you see in the Senegambia area are not Gambian, they are Liberians, Guineans, Nigerian, and Sierra Leoneans. They are cheap and easy with these toubabs. They let the toubab touch them just after they have bought drinks. After a few more drinks, they might even allow the toubabs to suck their breasts, or they feel their penises. Some may even suck the men's penises right around the corner. So toubabs often think that Gambian women are cheap and easy. They end-up leaving The Gambia telling their friends in Europe that we are no good, we are whores, we are easy girls, this and that. They don't even think to differentiate among us. (Interview December 2015).

From Olé's standpoint, West African migrant women working as sex workers are the ones giving them a bad name for they are willing to take risks and do things for very little money that they, as Gambians, are not willing to do. On one hand, Olé's statement is imbued with xenophobic remarks that posit Gambian female sex workers as valuing themselves more than the others. However, another reading of Olé's statement is that the global north tourists are ignorant about Africans, for them African women are the same, they make no distinction among the women, rather they are put in the same category as hypersexual and cheap. Another reading is that this is the way Olé and Gambian women like her manage living with a stigma. They project negative stereotypes about sex workers by the tourists on to the other, in this case the Liberian, Guinean, Sierra Leoneans, and Nigerians. Echoing Olé sentiment, Khadijatou added that "many of the Toubabs, because of ignorance, are unable to tell us from the them, and in fact many post

as if they were Gambians.” Now perhaps Khadijatou may be right in the sense that because of migration issues, many of the immigrants—especially those who have been living in the country for a while—have adopted local names and generally pass as Gambians as a way to avoid being harassed by the police. So if one is not familiar with the landscape and its people, one can very much assume that all black people around are Gambian. However, the more experienced Global North visitors are able to differentiate among the women. Take for example this English pilot who had the experience of living in The Gambia and who said;

You can always tell between the Senegambians and the other West Africans because the Senegambians don’t drink and tend to be softer, while the Liberian and Nigerians are rougher, very ghetto. You can always tell the other West Africans from the Gambians, because they are the one who will approach you asking for a cigarette and a beer” (Interview December 2015).

During my participant observation in these bars, my eyes got accustomed to the settings and in general I was able to tell Liberians and the Nigerians from the Gambians because they were usually younger and stayed in groups sitting at the bar with male friends. They were usually dressed more provocatively, wearing small shorts, skin-tight short dresses, baseball caps and sneakers. They were often loud, drinking and sharing their beers, interacting in ways that could be deemed aggressive. According to the Gambian female sex workers, the Liberian and Nigerian women were heavy consumers of drugs. Senegambian women—on the contrary—tended to dress in more modest clothing; they also usually waited to be approached by the tourists, and most of the time did not drink alcohol: they preferred to drink malta or other soft drinks. However, this

sense of greater modesty of Gambian women doesn't hold up all the time, especially when the economy gets bad, or when the tourism season is low which makes it more difficult to "make friends" with tourists.

Take for example the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which impacted mostly Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. Even though there were no reported cases of Ebola in The Gambia, many tourists cancelled their trips for fear of contamination, which brought about dismal 2014 and 2015 seasons for the tourism industry. At the time, money was scarce, and many businesses (hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, tour operators, etc.) suffered a great deal. The employees of these establishments went on for months without receiving a paycheck, which made money very tight: things were really hard on the people whose livelihood depended on the tourism industry. For most of the Gambians who live off of tourism in informal occupations or as self-employed small entrepreneurs, 2014 and 2015 were devastating years. This was so for many of the female sex workers who did not have many opportunities to befriend tourists. This often meant that the very few times they could hook up with a tourist, they were willing to take more risks with their safety and to expose themselves in ways harmful to them medically (exposure to HIV/AIDS and STIs and socially (risk of being stigmatized and or criminalized).

2014 and 2015 were definitely two years of a very desperate period. Khadijatou, who had never complained to me about any worry she might have, began telling me about her anxiety in not being able to buy food. That day I gave her \$50.00 to buy food. During a casual conversation one day, Tamara explained how she saw the difference between them—Senegambians—and West Africans:

We are Gambians, we may be poor but we have pride in ourselves. We live in this community where everyone knows us, so certain things you avoid doing.

When the European finds us here, we are able to eat well, and take good care of ourselves, so we don't live desperate lives, and do not give ourselves up cheaply.

Tamara's statement reveals the way in which Gambian female sex workers view themselves in opposition to other West African women. It asserts a kind of subjectivity that is not deprived of a sense of morality. Their refusal to not take certain risks must be related to Gambian gendered surveillance of women's sexuality. They understand that they must find ways to be discreet about their work for fear of being permanently locked into a sex work identity, which would virtually be impossible to do away with. As Olé noted:

Most of these Gambian men don't want to marry you, they will call you names like "prostitutes." I have had many disappointments, that's why I don't even deal with black men anymore."

Tamara, who has dated a Semester, said the following

Most of the Gambian guys who migrated to Europe often come back here. When you date them, the relationship doesn't last because they are listening to what people are saying about us, that we are prostituting ourselves with the toubabs. So the relationship ends because he is being dictated by his family members. They don't have respect for us at all.

Tamara, Olé and most of the Gambian female sex workers are in constant worry about being locked up for being identified as a sex worker. Being identified as a sex worker transforms women's social identity, which is not the case for the male sex worker. The

social sanctions placed on women to not assert their sexuality runs contrary to what their labor is built upon. While the Gambian male sex workers who befriend white female tourists are seen as entrepreneurs, the women are simply seen as *chagas*. Morality is gendered, and once being associated with being a chaga, no woman will be able to find a husband or move on with her life without being ostracized. On these grounds, the NIA (Jammeh's state apparatus security forces) and the police have been seeking to exert power over female sex workers. They insult them, harass them, and sometimes simply arrest them to extort money knowing very well that they cannot fight back.

The gendered nature of sex work is such in the Gambian sexcape that while some of the guys involved in sex work also have different "day jobs" in the tourism sector—as gardeners, security guards, handymen, etc. (see chapter 4)—women have limited access to other jobs because of the stigma of their "night jobs." It carries over with whatever else they do.

This points to the gendered moralizing behavior of the Gambian state during the Jammeh's regime when Tourism Security Forces exerted a strict control over Gambians' presence in tourism designated areas. For them, young Gambian women entering the TDA were automatically suspected of being sex workers. In an attempt to limit their movements and opportunities, the women are often stopped, questioned and harassed by security forces. They face state-inflicted violence and harassment in the hands of the Tourism Security Forces that are charged to safeguard the tourism industry often at the expense of its citizens's freedom of movement. Given the rigid socio-economic stratification, the gendered-based ordering of social interactions, and the limited

economic opportunities in the tourism industry, sexual-affective exchanges allow these Gambian women to renegotiate a place for themselves through the eventual opportunities that a special friendship with global north male tourists can bring them: in exchange of intimacy and access to their bodies, they expect some to receive some care and temporal (or definitive) relief from poverty.

### **Female Sex Workers in the Local Brothels**

Female sex workers who work in the local brothels are by far the most vulnerable group of women I encountered while conducting research in the Gambian sexscape. Unlike what has been documented in some Caribbean (Cabezas 2009; Kempadoo 2004) and Latin American (Cabezas 2009; Brenan 2009; Williams 2013) countries on relatively good working conditions in brothels, in The Gambia, the brothels are the worst places for women to do sex work (there is no brothel for male sex work). In fact, the working conditions are quite horrid. In December 2016, I got the opportunity to visit two brothels in the greater Kombo area, thanks to a contact of mine: Brother Malcolm, who directs an HIV/AIDS prevention outreach program. Unlike the women who perform sexual labor in the tourism industry by cultivating friendships with global north tourists, the sex workers attached to a brothel have clients who are mostly local working class men and mid-level Bangladeshi and Indian men working and residing in The Gambia. They charge for any transaction-like sexual service rendered.

The two brothels I visited were located in para-urban neighborhoods in Dippakinda and in Serrekunda. They are both owned by Lebanese Gambians, the first one by a man, and the other one by two sisters. They often employ gatekeepers to take care of the daily operations of the business, that is, collecting money from the women and

making sure that they work and don't create trouble. The majority of the women working in these brothels came from neighboring West African countries (Guinea, Senegal, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone); and a few were Gambians. My interviews with the women of each brothel were informal group discussions. I had invited, through Brother Malcolm, the women who wanted to share their experiences with me to join me in group discussion.

Our discussion took place while a group of women were having lunch together, eating from one big tray, as people usually do in the Senegambian region and in most of West Africa. Other women were braiding each other's hair, preparing themselves for the night. Others were listening to Islamic sermons coming out of their small radio. Our conversation unfolded in Pidgin English in order to accommodate the non-Wolof speakers.

Before, during, and after the group discussions, I was closer to some of the women than to others. There was Awa, a 21 year old from Nigeria, whose parents were farmers. After the death of her father, the family members had to find a way to survive on their own (her, her younger sister, and her mother). She was a teen mother and just couldn't see her mother suffering or not having enough to take care of her child. She decided to travel to The Gambia passing through Mali to find work. And this is how she finally landed in brothel in The Gambia. There was also Hawa, a 34 years old Liberian who was left as an orphan by the Liberian civil war in the 1990s. She lived in a refugee camp for a while. After not seeing any prospect for a brighter future, she decided to leave the camp. She ended up in Guinea first before arriving in The Gambia in the early 2000s. Hawa said that "I began working in the street in Guinea, charging men for sex,

which I am not ashamed to say”(Interview December 2016). The West African women in our group discussion were not ashamed to call themselves “sex workers,” unlike the Senegambians who were absolutely reluctant to do so. They preferred to say about themselves that they “were in this lifestyle.”

During one of the group discussions, when the Senegalese woman, Nabou, explained that she didn’t like the expression “sex worker,” the other women reacted interjecting: “You are a chaga, all of us are chagas!” The Senegambian women’s reluctance to admit that they are sex workers was interesting but not surprising to me because openly assuming an identity as “sex worker” goes against their socio-religious subjectivities. In fact, I wonder if the ease with which non-Senegambian West African women acknowledge that they are sex workers has to do with their being not being Muslim and that they are away from their families and communities, limiting their chances to be subjected to stigmatization.

As if wanting to counter what Nabou had said, a woman from Nigeria who didn’t say her name said: “I am a proud prostitute because thanks to this work I am able to take care of my mother and I have sent three family members to the University!” Annoyed by the interventions that contradicted her directly, Nabou almost shouted: “Well, this work found me but Allah also helped me find a man who is going to marry me!” Nabou, who served as the brothel’s gatekeeper, was proud to say that she is currently out of this lifestyle, although she admits that one is never completely out. At least for now she is not selling sex to make a living. All of the women attending both of the group discussions support family members through their work. Although some admit to hating the job, they

nonetheless took pride in letting me know that the work provided them opportunities to meet family obligations.

In the past, for the services they provide, they were charging clients D50.00 (\$1.25) for each interaction leading to one ejaculation. However, prices went up relatively recently when they discovered that some of the clients were taking pills to last longer before ejaculation:

“Before the price increase, some of the clients were taking tablets so that they could get on top of you and fuck, and fuck, until you are tired and they would not ejaculate.” (Hawa)

This posed a major problem for the ladies because it got uncomfortable. They acknowledge that the price increase has leveled the clientèle. The clients now have to pay D100.00 (\$2.50). The gatekeeper collects this fee prior to the client’s entrance in a room with a women. The women are allowed to negotiate other services with the clients on their own, and are allowed to keep the proceeds of such arrangements. Rose, a Nigerian woman, said that at times, you meet clients who just want to sit with you, they don’t want you to touch them, but they give you something, while others want to abuse you especially when they take their tablets.” The tablets that the women are talking about are Viagra. Such tablets, they explained, can create problems, especially when the clients are unable to ejaculate. Then, if they are asked to get off, they get very angry and frustrated, which can result in a physical altercation and their forcible removal from the premises. In general the women claimed that they are pleased with the working conditions in the brothels: they get along with each other well and the eventual problems that may surge arise mainly from clients and not from other women.

Kombo, a Senegalese woman in her late 30s seemed to be a leader among the women, especially for the Senegambian women. At the Serrekunda brothel, women were very divided: they were divided in groups; the Senegambian women took care of each other, while the other West Africans (Liberian, Nigerian, and Sierra Leoneans) also took care of themselves as a group. For our group discussions, only five Senegambian women and one Guinean woman joined the conversation.

In the Serrekunda brothel, clients were charged D100.00 for each ejaculation. This price was set by the owners, and any other service that takes place between the women and their clients are left for them to arrange and keep the proceeds of. On the other hand, unlike what was going on in the previous brothel, the ladies are expected to pay the owners D650 (\$16.25)/day every morning. Failure to pay this amount daily is met by public humiliations, and with the obligation to find other ways to pay for the fee. Women who continues to not able to pay the fee, are thrown out of the brothel. The gatekeeper for this brothel is a man: his major role is to ensure that things are running well. If a disagreement occurs between the women and their clients, the latter are always given the benefit of the doubt over the women, which results in the gatekeeper allowing the client to not pay for an interaction or only pay half price. In addition to the exploitation they face at the hands of their female owners, the women also get harassed and exploited by the police who sometimes come to brothel to shake them down for money on false charges, which results in the women having to pay a bribe or get rescued after arrest by Brother Malcolm who go pick them up at the local police station. Women were generally dissatisfied with their working conditions in that brothel. They generally

disliked their bosses, whom they said “were very bad to them and don’t care about them at all” (Interview December 2016).

I found the working conditions in both brothels quite terrible. The women make very little money but they are expected to give a lot of themselves both physically and I suspect emotionally. From the one quantitative case study that has been conducted on female sex workers in The Gambia (Sherwood et al 2015), we know that female sex workers face tremendous gender-based violence in their line of work in The Gambia.

### *Conclusion*

I began this chapter with the examination of Gambian notions of “proper” female sexuality and sexual behaviors in “traditional,” Islamic, and patriarchal contexts. This was done to provide a general background for a better comprehension of why women are making the decisions they are making in their specific situations as they engage in what I have called the Gambian sexscape and eventually, more specifically, in the tourism-based sexual economy. This approach is aligned with my theoretical disposition to analyze the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy considering the larger socio-economic and political processes that have led to the formation of contemporary Gambian society. My determination to avoid the cutting off the sexual encounters that take place within tourism between Global North tourists and Gambian and other West African sex workers from their immediate sociocultural and economic contexts and situations ultimately justifies my coining the concept of “socio-sexual” relationships: sexual encounters never take place in a vacuum and are always necessarily embedded within specific sociocultural realities of which fragments are carried along as the sexual encounter(s) unfold, informing all its aspects, which includes the tourism-based sexual economy.—

This theoretical disposition to approach first and foremost the perspectives of Global South sex workers who service Global North tourists, instead of exclusively listening to the voices of the latter while the former remain completely “silenced,” is certainly the major intervention this research aims to make. This intervention will contrast with the general approach adopted in most publications on what has been called “sex tourism” in tourism studies literature (Cohen 1982; Ryan 1999; Oppermann 1998)—which have not taken into consideration enough the full perspectives of Global South sex workers. In my borrowing Denise Brennan’s concept of “sexscape,” I do not emulate her definition, which tends to limit the scope of the sexscape to the actual relationships or “scripts”—as I call them in this dissertation—that make up the tourism-based sexual economy. Instead, as shown in what I have done in this chapter, I understand the sexscape as encompassing all socio-sexual scripts that constitute the realm of the socio-sexually possible for a woman in contemporary Gambian society: those scripts that actually make the Gambian tourism sexual economy (“Chepes-Semesters,” and “Gambian women-toubabs”), as well as those that are not directly part of it (“ideally/traditionally married couple,” “sugar babies-sugar daddies,” and “female sex workers in local brothels”). I have adopted this strategy to locate the socio-sexual scripts that make the tourism-based sexual economy within the Gambian sexscape, defined as “the wider realm of possible socio-sexual options available for women at that particular moment in time” in the hope that it helps better comprehend the decisions actually made by Gambian women as they sexually engage in Gambian local/transnational society and its sexscape.

Beginning the chapter with the examination and uncovering of Gambian notions of “proper” Gambian female sexuality and sexual behaviors in a chapter dedicated to the discussion of women’s participation in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy allowed us to focus on the unavoidable socio-religious constraints that work to control women’s sexuality and stigmatize those who transgress established norms. For Gambian women, engaging in the tourism-based sexual economy means navigating dangerous waters that will undoubtedly lead to having to pay an extremely high social cost. This is why the Gambian women who participate in the sexscape following any of the scripts identified in this chapter always attempt to emulate—no matter what their particular circumstances—the normative expectations and practices as “good” women, even though they might be transgressing these by, for example, getting involved in affective sexual exchanges with local or foreign men.

In so many ways, Gambian sugar babies, Chepehs, and female sex workers share a general and common understanding of Gambian socio-sexual practices. As such, they perform “proper” female embodied and discursive practices that allow them to establish themselves as “good” and marriageable women. As Goffman (1963) suggested: in spite of not adhering to social norms, stigmatized persons still apply these norms to themselves and others. In this case, in their efforts to minimize stigma, Gambian female sex workers seek to project negative behaviors associated with sex workers away from them and onto other West African female sex workers also participating in the tourism-based sexual economy. This projection is related to what Megan Rivers-Moore (2010) called “disidentification”: a way in which sex workers work to stay clear from societal negative representations of sex work by making claims to respectability while negotiating their

own status within society (Rivers-Moore 2010). Gambian women's participation in the tourism-based sexual economy is not divorced from the larger socio-sexual norms and as such their participation in the sexscape, in whatever script identified, continues to be under these norms' hegemony. I highlighted the many circumstance of poverty, under- and un-employment that have brought some Gambian women to use their young bodies as embodied capital, as a valuable resource at their disposal to carve out a better future for themselves and their families. Here, I must emphasize how much many of the descriptions of John M. Chernoff (2003 and 2005) resonate with the realities of the Gambian field and of the experiences of many Gambian and other West African female sex workers I have had the privilege to meet and interact with.

This chapter on Gambian and other West African women's participation in the Gambian tourism sexual economy is certainly one of the rare texts on that subject matter: indeed, their participation has certainly largely been ignored by scholars, as most of the scholarship has primarily focused on "friendships" between older white female tourists and Gambian men, ignoring relationships between Gambian women and older white male tourists, or between Gambian women and Gambian Semesters.

The Gambia's socio-economic crises and general structural reconfigurations have had a gendered impact on the lives of women. As a result, women have had to find innovative strategies to negotiate limited socioeconomic possibilities. Their social and economic alienations propelled them to be creative in their devising survival mechanisms. They become active agents in their appropriation of global forces and deployed strategies to secure their livelihood and perhaps future for themselves and their families.

Before ending this chapter and beginning to focus on the socio-sexual scripts from the perspective of Gambian men and their participation in the sexscape and in the tourism-based sexual economy, I must briefly provide additional information about the Senegambian history of systematic relationships between Europeans and Western African women in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. Historically, Senegambian Chiefs were said to commonly promote women's marriage to "strangers" to solidify trade relations, which made women of a particular caste serve as emissaries for both their Chiefs and their "foreign" husbands (Thiaw 2011:155). Senegambian Chiefs did not give to European men noble and free women located high in their caste system to marry, they gave them their *jams* (Wolof word for slave) and *Guels* (female praise singers and entertainers). "Strangers" were encouraged to buy *jams'* freedom in order to marry them (Thiaw 2011:155). The intimate relationships between white European men (at first mostly Portuguese, and at a later time also French, and English) and Senegambian women produced offspring called Luso-Africans (Portuguese and Mandingo women in Jufureh), *métis* (Frenchmen and Mandingo women), and "mulatto" in English (for any mixture between blacks and whites). Few Luso Africans lived along the Gambian river where they engaged in the slave trade, owned factories, and served as intermediaries between Europeans and Africans (See the work of Mahoney 1963; Gijanto 2009).

In contemporary Senegal, female Wolof who married European men were called *signares* (see Painting 1.1). *Signares* were mostly Wolof women who entered into temporary marriages with European merchants, officials, or soldiers who resided in the coastline during the transatlantic slave trade on Gorée Island in Saint Louis (Jones 2010). The *signares* are also said to be Afro-European women who owned properties that

yielded them high social standing. Their intimate relationships with European men (Dutch, British, Danish, and French) merchants allowed them to gain opportunities to foster their financial independence. George Brooks (2003) and Hilary Jones (2010) described signares as female entrepreneurs who occupied elite status due to their economic and social power. As Senegambian women, they used Wolof marital practices and understanding with their European partners that provided them access to European goods, gold, real estate, and slaves. As female entrepreneurs, the signares explored different avenues to expand their businesses by engaging in expeditions along the Senegambia coastline to acquire gold and slaves (Gamble 1957; Brooks 2003; Jones 2010). Signares are usually depicted as women who mix European and Senegalese styles, in an effort to merge the two worlds (Hilary Jones 2010): See the picture below, from a painting by a French artist named Myrto Debard, who lived on Gorée island in 1950.

Painting 1.1: Titled Chevalier de Boufflers



(Taken from Senegalmetis.com, accessed on October 29, 2017 at <http://senegalmetis.com/Senegalmetis/Accueil.html>).

Historicizing interracial intimacy in the Senegambian region affords the suggestion of continuity: interracial intimacy began in colonial time in the Senegambian region. The women foregrounded in this chapter are in many ways unlike the signares because they face stigmatization, marginalization and unending poverty, while the signares are celebrated and remembered as successful entrepreneurs with great social and economic power, whose history of engagement with European men provided them with high social class status.

## CHAPTER IV

### Kilifas, Toyboys, Chanters, and MSM: The Gambian Sexscape, Gambian Men's Perspectives, and the Tourism-Based Sexual Economy

I grew up in Bakau New Town in the 1980s. I often went to the beach with male and female cousins despite my grandfather's specific prohibition to go to the sea because he feared we would drown. I suspect that he also didn't want us to be seen as idling around in the tourism area, where one got to see young Gambian men walking side by side with older female toubabs serving as their "guides." These young men who at the time lived in a predominantly Mandinka farming town were in fact engaged in the developmental changes brought on by the introduction of the tourism industry in the mid-1960s. Bakau's social and economic life before the start of the tourism industry was characterized by systems of family-based agricultural unit productions, where families depended on subsistence farming on their own land. The introduction of the tourism industry reconfigured the town and its people, diverting them from what was once mostly a subsistence economy to a "monetary economy" based on wage labor (Brown 1992; Dieke 1994). The town's physical landscape shifted with the construction of modern hotels and guest-houses. A tourist market was also built where local Gambians and other West Africans made and sold handicrafts to tourists, who at the time were mainly coming from Scandinavian countries (see chapter 1). Though the tourism industry brought about some job opportunities in hotels, restaurants, and guest houses, the many young men from Bakau, in their majority under-educated, only had very small chances of getting these

new jobs as they had to compete with applicants from all over the country (Brown 1992; Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979; Mitchell & Faal 2007).

As indicated in Chapter 1, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program pushed a neoliberal development plan on The Gambia and its people. The unfolding of this plan profoundly transformed the local landscape and the lives of the people who were living in the Kombo St, Mary coastal area and in The Gambia in general. The application of this plan provided the basis for contemporary continuing inequality and exploitation, in a disposition where local cultures and habits were seen as nothing but impediments and obstacles on the unavoidable move towards progress and modernity. Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond's (1979) assessment of the plan went like this:

While in our view the assumptions, which are explicit in this plan, are common to most such development projects. It is unusual to find a plan in which the format for creating dependency is so clearly developed on the basis of explicit racist assumptions about the nature of Africans and African society. It is also rare to find such an unashamed articulation of the dominant aid agency philosophy of "modernization", including the total redefinition of indigenous culture (Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979:78).

Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond (1979) studied the implementation of the Bafuloto Plan highlighted the social changes that took shaped when the plan to developed a tourism industry in The Gambia, and its social consequences: land tenure systems were reorganized, which left many locals to lose their agrarian way of life to develop hotels and restaurants; local *Alkali* (village chiefs) who previously had total jurisdiction over their community and land-holding were displaced by municipal councils; the creation of a

new urban center further pulled internal migration from the rural areas; truancy among school children reached an alarming rate as youngsters go to the beaches to beg tourists (Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979:84-87). These observations coupled with the lack of opportunities, social services, poverty and a large youthful population pushed many youths to try their luck in the tourism-based sexual economy. It is in this context that many Gambian youths, especially those from Bakau, abandoned farming and began looking for opportunities in the tourism industry, even if only in its “informal” sector (Goodwin; Brown 1992). This is a situation that left many youths socio-culturally marginalized. At the time, these young men were called *Paco*, “cosmopolitan guys who were living off the margins.” Pacos, along with many other young Gambians, imagined and dreamed of achieving a new way of life thanks to emigration to Europe, which has been seen as the panacea for happiness. A special term emerged in Gambian youth culture to delineate this desire to get out of the country: *nerveseh*. That is in such a context that the majority of the pacos became chanters, guys who hung around the tourism area in hopes of initiating an interaction with Global North tourists. The chanters became known and typecasted as misguided, lazy, uneducated youths who wore locs as a hairstyle, smoke ganja, loved reggae music, and kept a youthful swagger in opposition to their serious Muslim fathers, who defined “proper” Islamic patriarchal masculinity. As Naomi Brown (1992) noted in her study of young men in Bakau, whom she called “cultural broker/beach boys,” they felt marginalized from the world of their elders, which they rejected as being irrelevant to their own needs and wants.” They regarded traditional pursuits as meaningless and as a result “they directed outwards from their community towards Europe” (Brown 1992:362). I beg to add to Brown’s observation the

stagnant economic conditions that alienated a lot of these youth following their inability to live up to socio-sexual expectations: being a provider and head of household.

Young women are expected to live at home until marriage, regardless of their age. They are taken care of financially by their parents, if they are able to do so. Things are very different for young men. Once they finish High school or Quranic school around the age of 18, they are expected to find work and contribute to the household needs as emerging patriarchs, especially in families where there is an aging father or an absent father. This puts enormous pressure on these young men to find a way to make a living so that they are able to fulfill these expectations, especially when parents are unable to help them further with their eventual educational goals.

A neoliberal economic development plan more or less “imposed” on The Gambia after independence, took the country away from agriculture (mostly groundnuts) to open it up to tourism. The hope was that this would diversify the economy and bring in foreign currencies. Despite the big results anticipated, The Gambia’s economic conditions made few strides after independence. In fact, its economic situation went in a downward spiral, which forced many Gambians to find new ways to generate an income out of the informal sector that ran along side the tourism industry. What used to be a few guys befriending tourists became a “viable path” for many opportunity-less young men to make a living and hopefully establish a relationship with a toubab. Pacos hang out and cultivate friendships with toubabs, mainly older global north white female tourists who could eventually facilitate their emigration to Babylon (a borrowed term that came out of Rastafarian teachings about the West and that urban Gambians use to refer to the Global North). A variety of etic terms have been in use to refer to the pacos: “bumster, beach

boys, hustlers, professional friends, guides, cultural brokers, tour operators, and chanters” (Brown 1992; Ebron 2002; Nyanzi et al 2005; Wagner and Yama 1986). For this dissertation, I chose to use “chanter,” the emic term many of my interlocutors self-identify with, as opposed to “bumster,” which carries derogatory connotations and criminalization that have “justified” the use of force against them by the state.

Over the decades, these young men became prominent fixtures in the Kombo St. Mary. As a result they came to be vilified and targeted as a major problem for the tourism industry by The Gambian state (see Brown 1992; Gambian Tourism Authority 2005; Nyanzi et al. 2005; Ebron 2002); Western Tourism Companies and travel media (see Lawson and Jaworski 2007); and by some scholars working in the West (see for example Ebron 2002; Lawson and Jaworski 2007) and from the larger Gambian society which range from disapproval to ambivalence to support (see Ebron 2002; Jassey 2005; Nyanzi et al. 2005). Much of the scholarly writing about the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy has centered on the racialized sexual intimacy between young Gambian men locally referred to as “bumsters” and their much older white female tourist friends/lovers. Most of these studies depict the “bumsters” as having a negative impact on guest-host interactions, following the preoccupations of big hotel managers, tour operators, and Gambian tourism officials to take care of the tourists’ well-being and perspectives. Many portray the “bumsters” as a nuisance because they do nothing else but “harass and hustle the tourists, leaving them to have negative experiences” (see for example Lawson and Jaworski 2007; McCombes 2008). Other research tend to downplay the process of racialization these relations/”friendships” entail to emphasize instead how much these relationships disrupt gender norms in the country (see for example Ebron

2002; Chant and Evans 2010). While these studies explain some aspects of the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy, most miss the complex nuances of the larger sexscape as I have theorized it in chapter 2. They do not take into consideration the inherent contradictions, ambivalence and dynamic characteristics of the larger sexscape that always informs male and female Gambian socio-sexual understandings of, and behaviors in the Gambian tourism sexual economy. As was the case in Chapter 3 with the Gambian and other West African female sex workers, to decipher the inter-racial interactions of young Gambian men with Global North female tourists requires an intersectional approach involving the examination of the role played by race, gender, class, nationality, and religion.

This chapter considers and expands on previous analyses of the Gambian sexscape made in Chapter 3 from the perspective of Gambian and other West African women. It attempts to approach the Gambian sexscape from the perspective of Gambian and other West African men by exploring a number of socio-sexual scripts, including those that do make the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy, and particularly the multifaceted and complex socio-sexual encounters and interactions between female Global North (usually European) tourists and the Gambian young men they obtain sexual/affective services from. The scripts discussed below will not be limited to the tourism-based sexual economy: the role of young Gambian men called “toyboys” and their older Gambian women lovers, as well as the underground interactions between Gambian men who sleep with other Gambian men and Global North male tourists. The chapter begins with a critical analysis of Gambian masculinity through 1) the deconstruction of the “traditional” notion of “manhood” at work in Gambian

predominately Muslim society, and 2) the deciphering of key performances of masculinity in “traditional contexts.” Anthropologists have noted, documented, and revealed the link between neoliberal market reforms and the social and economic transformations they provoked in Africa, making many men unable to uphold hegemonic ideals of masculinity that expect men to be providers (Groes-Green 2009; Hunter 2011; Ratele 2011). Young Gambian men’s involvement in the tourism-based sexual economy to have strategic sex with Global North female tourists is emblematic of these forces and processes. Ironically, young Gambian men must satisfy the usually much older female toubabs—who are in relation to them in a position of provider—to be able to provide for their own families and meet Gambian ideals of masculinity.

### **Gambian “Traditional” Performances of Masculinity**

As some scholars have noted, The Gambia is very much a male-dominated and gerontocratic society upheld by colonialism, Islam and Christianity (Bellagamba 2013; Chant & Touray 2012; Saine 2012). Male dominance has been contested and challenged for some time now. Gambian women farmers have been fighting against any attempt of patriarchal control over their land, labor and income. They have been doing so from colonial times (Carney & Watts 1991; Schroder 1999; Carney 2008; Kea 2010). Gambian women activists have been organizing public discussions about a number of gender-based issues such as polygamy, female genital cutting, access to education and political positions, and Islam and women’s rights. They have tackled these issues frontally in civil society (Touray 2006; GAMCOTRAP 2003). As an African feminist, I come with the understanding that all forms of patriarchy works to harm men, women, and children. I find approaches of patriarchy that understand it exclusively as a state of affairs that is

detrimental to women only to be simplistic and counterproductive. This being said, what are the Gambian experiences of, and reactions to patriarchy?

Most Gambian males learn about masculinity from male relatives: their fathers, uncles, grandfathers and other male kin. Boys are educated to look up to their fathers and older male relatives and learn from them. In both rural and urban area, the expectations for boys and girls are very different, as are their role in the household. This situation is in great part grounded on “traditions,” Islam, and Christianity. As a general rule, children are socialized to take care of parents in their old age and younger siblings. Once they are able to work, they constitute a family safety net particularly for parents too old to take care of themselves. Older siblings, especially first born (called *taw* in Wolof and *follo* in Mandinka)—particularly males—are expected to fill the shoes of parents who are no longer able to take care of the household (Saine 2012).

Boys’ socialization occurs in age groups going through circumcision rituals (called *llei* in Wolof and *Kassai’o* in Mandinka). Traditionally, in these periods of ritual socialization, age groups are secluded and taught the values of their respective ethnic group: being virtuous, brave, and rightful men by performing certain “masculine” tasks such as hunting, farming, and collecting firewood (Saine 2012:132). After the rite of passage, those who underwent it in the age group become young men. They look to each other for social and economic support later on in life. Some will name their children after each other and maintain a strong bond for the rest of their lives (Saine 2012).

Young men are given the freedom to live a carefree life, which doesn’t include domestic work. Young men are allowed to play sports, hangout freely with friends, and generally enjoy a freedom of movement that young women do not. They must not worry

about domestic work because that is considered to be women's domain. Post-rite of passage carefree young men are called *ndongo* in Wolof and *kambano* in Mandinka. This is when they are from teenager to early adulthood. As carefree young men, they are given the opportunities to bend social rules and/or defy adult authority within certain parameters. They are expected and allowed to have girlfriends, experiment in smoking cigarettes or marijuana but not in front of their parents. Unlike young Gambian women who are expected to keep their virginity at all cost to avoid bringing shame to themselves and their families and reduce their chances of marriage, young men are not expected to keep their virginity. This is a gender-based socio-sexual expectation that creates and solidifies double standard and expectations for young Gambians preparing to enter full adulthood through marriage. This carefree period for young men can last a long time: until one is able and desires to marry a "good" girl and become a family man. As stated earlier, marriage constructs adulthood in a gendered way, pushing young women to marry and build their homes early in life as a high priority. Young men, on the other hand, must get an education and secure a good job to embrace "social success" and be able to provide for a group of related kin (usually parents, some lateral kin, and the children) is the primary concern. They are expected to be the primary breadwinner in their families, which brings parents to prioritize boys' education over girls'. As they are able socially and financially, men are expected to find a "good" partner and get married.

To get married, Muslim men must get the approval of their parents, who will send a male kin of the interested young men to the young woman's (or girl's) house to ask for her hand in marriage by bringing a gift to her male kin. Depending on the nature and value of this first gift, which reveals the seriousness of the young man and his family and

his ability to take care of their daughter, the girl's parents accept the gift or not. As Modou, a 29 years old single man told me:

In our society, even if you like a girl and you want to marry her, you can't go empty handed, you have to go with a heavy gift and sometimes that's not enough, which can make the girl's parents feel insulted, causing them to refuse your gift.

This is why sometimes, your family may even help you come up with the first gift (Interview January 2016).

The first gift is very important because it speaks to a man's social success and his ability to be a provider. It also reveals the value he gives to his wife to be, and can bring him—if generous enough—respect and admiration socially. Upon the acceptance of the first gift, the marriage is tied at the mosque among the men of both kin groups. For Muslims, there is no engagement: once an agreement is made, the male wedding takes place immediately. This is done to avoid potential mishaps—premarital sexual encounters.

For Christian young men, things happen a bit differently. Though an interested young man may give a first gift, he is usually expected to express his interest by engaging his girlfriend. This engagement may take from a few months to a couple of years before they get married.

Marriage allows men to enter into adulthood, as they become *Kilifa*, a Wolof term for “responsible patriarch who is able to take care of a household financially and socially.” A *Kilifa* may not neglect to take care of his immediate family, for failure to do so will speak to his failure as a husband. Such a situation can become grounds for his wife to ask for divorce. In an Islamic setting, a husband's failure to financially and sexually take care of his wife can be interpreted as his inability to assume his duties as a

man. As wives are expected to hold the household together, so are husbands. Even in polygamous marriages, the husband is expected to meet all his obligations towards his wives. Muslims men, according to Islamic law, are allowed to have up to four wives. This does not give them a pass to cut down on their responsibilities as husbands. Though some Muslim men engage in polygamous marriages as a sign of social prestige and success, failure to upkeep these wives and households can lead to the loss of social prestige, public shame and humiliation. As Idirissa, a 38 year old father of four, told me:

Here most men want to have wives because they think this makes them big men. But behind the public appearance, they are under a lot of pressure and stress to keep up. If you look at some of them, they look skinny because of the stress while their wives are fat (Interview June 2015).

In The Gambia and in many African societies in general, being fat is a sign of wealth, it means that one is eating well, as opposed to being skinny, which evokes poverty, lack of good food, or sickness. Men try to keep up with Islamic ideals of masculinity and engage in polygamous marriages for prestige. Others engage in it because of kinship obligations. Among the Mandinka, Serahuli, and Fula ethnic groups, marriages are arranged. There is an expectation for ethnic endogamy, even though men are allowed to marry outside of their ethnic group. Men are under pressure to engage in polygyny to fulfill the obligation to marry at least one girl in their ethnic group, which is arranged by his parents. In these cases, the girl chosen is usually a relative. So social pressure is on him not to refuse this arranged marriage, for failure to do so can create tensions and cause a rift among the involved families. Men are expected to honor kinship obligations and cement family ties.

As pious Muslims and Christians, they are expected to pray and be seen at the mosque for Friday prayers (called *Juma*), or Sunday Church services. And as heads of household, they are expected to lead prayers and serve as exemplar of good virtuous Muslims and Christians. They are expected to be good husbands who are generous to their wives and children by providing food, shelter, clothing. They should ideally be wooing wives with gifts, paying for the kids' school fees, and taking care of the general well-being of the family. Demba, a 35 years old single man who is under pressure by his family to find a wife told me:

You see, me I am not ready to get marriage because I don't have nothing! I am barely surviving on my own, so how do they expect me to take care of a wife?

Most guys who are married are struggling to keep their household together. They are constantly short of money, so they are having to borrow money here and there just to upkeep their homes, that is not right!" (Interview December 2016).

Men like Demba are in constant fear of not being able to measure up to being-a-provider role. Children, especially male, are expected to pay for the expense of sending their parents to Mecca to perform *Hajj*, a required Islamic pilgrimage. During the month of Ramadan, a man is expected to provide and give bags of rice, oil, and money to his parents and his in-laws. During religious holidays such as *Koriteh* (celebration marking the end of Ramadan) and *Tobaski* (the feast of sacrifice), a husband is expected to sacrifice a lamb on behalf of his family if financially able. A portion of that lamb is consumed in the household, while the rest is distributed to neighbors and relatives. Eating and drinking to mark the holy occasion follows the slaughtering of the lamb. The celebration is also an occasion when husbands are expected to provide new clothing for

their wives and children for the Eid prayers, and for the general festivities. During Christmas, Christian husbands are also expected to provide food, refreshments and new clothing for the family. As a male interlocutor told me:

Holidays are the most stressful times for men because you are expected to dish out a lot of money to keep everyone happy and you have to do it at all cost or else you will not feel good (Interview June 2015).

Abusive husbands are seen as wicked men who are not deserving of respect because they are not “real men.” They are looked down upon and hence, not worthy of heading a household.

Being a man in The Gambia comes with a heavy burden and social responsibilities. As a result, many men are unable to fulfill these responsibilities, impacting their self-esteem. Though in general—and times are changing—boys are often prioritized with respect to education and resources, they by no means are guaranteed access to a good employment. Although men have an edge over women in the labor market, it doesn't give them automatic financial satisfaction.

The political economy of The Gambia since colonialism onward went through profound changes that have impacted individuals' experiences. The neoliberal economy that followed decolonization and the subsequent government implementation of structural adjustment programs in the 1980s that were enforced by the World Bank and the United Nations, combined with the failed economic policies of both Jawara and Jammeh, led to an acute increase in rural and urban poverty (Harrell-Bond & Harrell-Bond 1979; Klein 1972; Mitchell 2007; Saine 2009). This challenging situation was made more acute with a demographic boom (see chapter 1). Many young people suffer from high unemployment

and under-employment. For these multiple reasons, many Gambian men—especially the younger ones—are prevented from fully exercising their roles as fathers and potential husbands. There is no other option for them but to find new ways to overcome financial and social adversities. One avenue to do that consists of stepping up the generational ladder and engage in strategic sex with older middle- and upper-class Gambian women, and/or Global North male or female tourists in both hetero- and homosexual interactions.

### **Toyboys and their *Jigegs*: Intergenerational Sexual-Affective Connections.**

The first time I witnessed a *Jigeg* going after a young guy was in 2009. I was at a local eatery with my family (my mother and some of my cousins). My mom, who was also visiting the country at the time, ran into an old friend from Bakau, a woman in her 50s. After they hugged and chatted, my mother introduced us to her, which also followed with a series of hugs and greetings. Then, the woman turned to my male cousin and said: “who is this one? He is a *thiof*! And you know, I like them young. I guess, in the States they call a woman like me a cougar...?” *Thiofs* are desirable and handsome men, young and old. They are named after the most expensive and sought-after fish in The Senegambia (see Nyamnjoh 2005). Her intervention was followed by laughter, mostly from both her and my mother, who simply said to her: “I see you are still naughty and bad!” As she went back to her table, we all looked at each other in shock at how forthright she had been. We jumped on the opportunity to tease my mortified male cousin. Once the meal was over, we proceeded to exit the restaurant. While doing so, we approached her table to say goodbye. She said that it was great seeing us and that she hoped to see us before we return to the States, “especially that handsome one...” My cousin politely smiled and walked away. On our way back to the family compound riding in a car with my other

cousins (my mother was riding with her older cousins in a different vehicle), we engaged in a chat about what had happened in the restaurant. In that car ride, I learned from my cousins as they explained: “Nowadays, the mere (an older woman) are going after young boys, they take care of them, and then they go to bed with them, they are not even ashamed!” Another male cousin who was at first not involved in our conversation said: “Hey, what’s there to be ashamed of? If that mere was going after me, I would have exchanged numbers with her and let her take care of me. You have too much pride in yourself!” As we laughed and told him that he was being silly, I quickly realized that in fact he was not being silly at all. That is after that interaction that I began systematically collecting stories and interviews about jigege and their toyboys.

Malick, a 26 year old toyboy enrolled in trade school to learn to be an electrician, and who had a lower middle-class background, was happy to sit with me for an interview to talk about his friendship with a jigege, a divorcee in her mid 50s. Malick said that they met at her house, a compound where he often hangs out and drinks attaya with his boyfriends, one of which is the nephew of his jigege. As time when by, about a month or so after he began hanging in that compound, the lady invited him for dinner, “a very late dinner,” said Malick. After the dinner, she began teasing him and eventually invited him to her bedroom. “I have to admit I was a little nervous because you just don’t go into a lady’s bedroom, especially a mere...” For Malick going into an older women’s bedroom was a taboo that a young man is not supposed to cross over. However, he went in, he said smiling during our interview. He added that the bedroom was smelling like *thiouraye* (incense), and that when he saw her *bin bin* and white *bethio* (a wrap around worn as an undergarment), and “that was it!” This is how his liaison with the jigege began. They

agreed to keep their friendship a secret, even though Malick admitted that he so wanted to tell his boys and boasts about it, but he knew he had to show her respect and remain silent about it. Malick's jigege would give him money. When she travelled she would bring him polo shirts and jeans, items that of high value for young men across the social economic ladder. Malick explained that this was the perfect friendship because there was no real pressure.

She made me the best meals, I drove her car, and sometimes I get to drive her to places while she takes care of her business. She helps me think about my future. She is great in bed! I got to be a husband without the added responsibility (Interview January 2016).

In many of these toyboy/jigege friendships, it is understood that the jigege who is more able financially, will assist the toyboy with his financial needs. He, in return, will not only provide sexual intimacy but also help her in other areas where she needs help. In Malick's case, it was serving as her driver and running errands for his jigege. For many young men like Malick, being in a relationship/friendship with a jigege is quite refreshing because it comes with a lot of perks. It also allows them to fulfill their current financial and social needs without the added pressure of being a kilifa. As Malick wrapped up our interview, he told me:

You see Sis, jigege are a great friend to have because they know how to take care of their men. Something the younger girls need to learn so they can be better wives.

To that, I responded that we all have to learn from one another, that this is what life is all about. Malick's account wasn't surprising because it made *jigegs* appear much like the *Diriyankee's* from Dakar that Nyamnjoh (2005) discussed:

These women invest a lot in keeping their man. This is done so well that they could make even the most devoted religious authority forget the time for prayers (2005:304).

As already made obvious, this statement is echoed by Gambian men I interviewed. These statements speak to the Islamic understanding and fear of female sexuality that brings *fitna* by pushing men to lose control and in so doing neglect being faithful servants of Allah. As a result, this brings chaos into the Umma, community of the faithful. The relationship between Malick and his *jigeg* is looked at as an ideal for most of these toyboys who look at such relationships as opportunities to momentarily take care of their responsibilities without the added stress of being a husband. As for his *jigeg*, she also gets the chance to enjoy sexual intimacy with a younger man, privately and safely, avoiding the risk of social condemnation.

Helen is a 56 years old widow and a mother of two. She is a businesswoman who calls herself a "sugar-mommy" because she is involved with a 28 years old boy. Helen explained to me that after the death of her husband, she just did not want to enter into another marriage again. Though her deceased husband was a good husband and a provider, he often left her unsatisfied sexually. So when she met her toyboy by chance, she was happy because he was really great in bed. Helen said:

I didn't expect to be in a relationship with a boy, because I could be his mother, and you know in our society we are not supposed to engage in such relationship

because people will talk and look down on you as being immoral, while it is okay for the Pa's (older men) to be with young girls" (Interview November 2016).

Helen's sentiment was shared by all the few jigegs I had the opportunity to interview. They expressed frustration with the fact that their toyboy/jigeg relationships/friendship are frowned upon while their male counterparts' relationships with sugar-babies are tolerated. This is part of the social stigma women of a certain age like Helen risk when they express their sexual needs. Mature women are expected to suppress their sexuality and sexual desires, to exclusively adopt a role as a mother (mere). In the eyes of Gambian society, a mother is not someone who is sexually involved, let alone with younger men unfit to be their husbands. Though in the Quran, Muhammad's first wife Khadija is said to be older than him. References to that sacred relationship were made at numerous occasions during my interviews of bothtoyboys and jigegs as if to legitimize their liaison, morally "unacceptable." These relationships operate in a clandestine manner and once socially revealed, they are met with a flurry of gossips, condemnation, and ridicule that very often depict the women as foolish for engaging in non-respectable behaviors. When uncovered, toyboys are seen as disrespectful. This is why discretion is important for these relations. Jigegs often target boys who they know they can count on to keep the relationships secret. Even though these relationships are kept secret, the caveat is that unlike sugar-babies and chepehs, jigegs are women who enjoy some higher level of sexual freedom, in a culture that disapproves sex outside of marriage. As divorcee and widows, jigegs can live by themselves without raising suspicion, for they have already gone through a life-cycle as respectable women, that is they got married and had children in the "proper way." During my fieldwork, some of my interlocutors told me

stories of some boys who were able to migrate to Europe with the help of their Semester jigeg, which is interesting being that it is always assumed that only white Global North tourists are able to facilitate migration possibilities for young Gambian men.

The significance of the toyboy-jigeg script within the larger sexscape is to reveal the way older women, whom society expects to be asexual, are working their way around to assert their sexual needs and desire for younger men, pointing to a need to appreciate the recognition of women with respect for their complex identities and sexualities (Arnfred 2004 and Tamale 2011). Toyboy-jigeg relationships highlight the socio-sexual changes that are taking place in Gambian society, where older Gambian women are working to lift the veil of the expected celibacy society conferred upon them, unlike what is tolerated from their male counterparts. From here, how do we make sense of young racialized Gambian men's sexual intimacy with older white Global North female tourists within the Gambian sexscape? The next section seeks to unpack these encounters.

### **The “Chanter” and Female Toubab Friendships**

Chanters are generally referred to as “professional friends” who engage in the sexual economy with tourists (see Bah et al. 2005; Nyanzi et al. 2005). Often, they are depicted as aimless guys who hassle tourists in hopes of building friendships that can eventual facilitate migration to the West, which they imagine as a place filled with opportunities. Bah et al (2005) argued that in the early days of the tourism industry, these “professional friends” were guys that tourists depended upon as informal guides (Bah et al 2005). Currently, tourists are still dependent on these guys as guides-friends, however, the thing that has changed is that now chanters have been forced to professionalized their activity by having to acquire a license from the Gambian Tourism Board, where they are asked to

pay taxes and licensing fee if they want to continue working in the tourism industry. Within the tourism-based sexual economy of The Gambia, scholars have given these guys and their activities different definitions and identities. Brown (1992) referred to them as “beach boys or culture brokers”, Adama Bah and Herold Goodwin (2003) defined their activities as:

[They are] young men who engage tourists in conversations/hassle tourists in order to establish a relationship with the intent of providing services including sex for which they can earn either from the tourists or from stalk holders who pay commissions” (Bah & Goodwin 2003:24).

Sara Lawson and Jaworski (2007) called them “cultural mediators” because they make it possible for tourists to experience the Gambian cultural way of life. While these definitions and identities are correct when considering some aspect of chanters’ activities, they nonetheless stop short of naming and defining their activities as sex workers, which fundamentally negates the official existence of their labor in the tourism-based sexual economy and in the larger Gambian sexscape.

In an effort to not participate in the stereotyping of “bumsters” and not continue the use of an etic and pejorative term to describe who they are, I chose to use the emic expression of “Chanter,” which my interlocutors used to call themselves. I definitely do not want to participate in the reproduction of the oppressive structure that criminalizes them and their activities. Three of my research participants called themselves “bumster.” They did so to defy popular perception about them and their activities, as if they were in a way reclaiming the meaning of the term with pride as a form of protest.

Chanters are guys who build relationships with global north tourists. Those I have interviewed range from 18 and up to 52 years old. The majority of the Chanters who participated in my study had some primary school education; some even completed high school. What they all had in common is that they had all completed their Islamic education in a local *darra*, traditional Islamic school. All of them were Muslims, even though I observed that in some bars you also had other West African Christian men (from Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia) offering their services in the tourism-based sexual economy. When approached to participate in my study, many refused from the get go. They didn't want to be associated with what many saw as criminal activities that could perhaps get them arrested by the tourism security unit, a risk they couldn't afford to take as immigrants.

The Chanters were not a monolithic group. During the tourism season many shared that they had to reside in the Kololi beach area. Others were living in the compound of their families or relatives living in the larger Kombo beach area. The majority of my research participants originally came to the coastal area as rural migrants. Very often, during low tourism season they go back to their family farm. During the tourism season, some sleep in the area of the deserted bars on the beach, or they make shift tents on the beach. Three of the chanters I interviewed were returnees from Europe (Sweden, Denmark, and the U.K.). They had to leave for the legal issues they: immigration violations, marital discord, and criminal cases for selling drugs, being arrested, and then deported. At more than one occasion, these three guys were proud to show me their passports showing their residence in Europe. They often spoke to me as a fellow semester, especially in front of their fellow chanters. Though not formally

employed in the tourism industry, chanters are involved in the service sector as guides, sex workers, taxi drivers, craft-sellers, waiters, security guards, musicians, gardeners, drug selling to tourists, fishermen, and as middle men between male tourists and female sex workers. They also assist tourists negotiate prices with local vendors in the markets (Brown 1992; Ebron 2002; Lawson & Jaworski 2007; Nyanzi et al. 2005; Nyanzi & Bah 2009). In an effort to make a living, many chanters manage to keep their service jobs while engaging in sex work with global north tourists. A great deal of their appeal to these white female tourists is their youth, their race, and their physical appearances.

Ingrid, a 58 years old woman from Berlin, Germany said:

The only thing I can tell is that Gambian guys are good in bed, they have beautiful bodies and they last longer in bed and they have a good style, you get what I mean. That is why us white chicks never want to go back with a white man in bed. I can tell cause I met enough by now. The problem is not the age is the different worlds we are living, the different expectation and so on. We don't come here to rape children like old men traveling to Thailand and so on. Since Gambian men only have their genitals to offer this is just fine that we wish to take it, what wrong with that. We are living in a sex-crazed society, why shouldn't overweight women have fun? (Interview January 2016).

That is why most of them invest time and effort to keep up physical appearances. Every morning or late evening, many chanters are seen working out shirtless at the beach, swimming, doing push ups and squats, running and or playing football just to upkeep their assets: their masculine, fit, and attractive physique to remain marketable (for similar

descriptions in the Caribbean, see de Albuquerque 1999; De Moya & Garcia 1999; Padilla 2007).

Gambian men are working hard to draw the attention of Global North female tourists who come to the country alone or with a husband or with friends looking to satisfy erotic fantasies and desires. An excellent profile of these women has been highlighted in Jeannette Belliveau's *Romance on the Road: Traveling Women who love foreign men* (2006). Belliveau, who is a travel writer and an unabashed female sex tourist, wrote that book as an international guide for Global North women looking to "find love" with foreign men around the world as they vacation. The book's content is divided into regions and countries known for accommodating sexual encounters between female Global North tourists and local men. Under the "Sub-Saharan Africa," The Gambia was featured as a place for older white female tourists interested in inter-generational sexual liaisons with local "beach boys/Wolof boys" (Belliveau 2006: 155). These are white women in their 50s, 60s, and even 70s from Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia looking to engage in sexual-affective interactions with young Gambian guys (Belliveau 2006:153). Not surprisingly, Belliveau posits these women and their interactions with local men as the product of "two sexual freedoms from the beginning to and end of history converge: the license of the modern Information Age woman and that of the polygamous, cattle-herding man" (Belliveau 2006:153). She then adds that in The Gambia, "Scandinavian women began to arrive on sex charters; a neighbor of mine, an African hand, heard these were called 'Black Cock Tours'" (Belliveau 2006:154). One of the chanters I regularly chatted with, Momodou, referred to this specific sexual interest of Global North female tourists who visit The Gambia:

Some of the toubabs come here in what is called the sex trade visits. These women come here and use their money as weapons. They know that we are poor, so they use their money as weapons to get what they want from us. Sex is the toubabs number one priority (Interview July 2015).

As Becky from Flitwick, the U.K., who seemed to be in her late 50s, bluntly told me:

Come on, lets break the taboo, we have all heard about how sweet Gambian men are. At 45 or 50year old, men in the West don't really pay attention to us anymore, they like them younger. So we gotta get the groove somewhere else. If it is not Gambia for the sweet talk and big mamba, it would be Jamaica for the big bamboo, or the Dominican Republic. British women are among the most well known sex tourist, of both sex. (Interview November 2016).

Belliveau and her fellow Global North tourists prefer to not admit that many of them travel to the regions and countries discussed in *Romance on the Road...* (2006) for nothing other than to purchase sex from local men. Instead, they disguise it as “romance tourism,” reproducing a gendered understanding of sexuality linked to the Victorian age, whereas white women are presumed to not engage in practices or activities aimed at living out their erotic desires and fantasies thanks to their relative economic power over “local lovers” (Frohlick 2009; Sanchez-Taylor 2006). And for women like Becky who acknowledge their desire to be with Gambian men, they reproduce a discourse blending issues related to gender, sexuality, and affect that are enmeshed in ideas of “racial and cultural difference.” As such, these global north female tourists have the capacity to exploit Gambian men by fully taking advantage of unequal global power and economic structures to pursue and satiate their racialized sexual desires and fantasies. In the

Gambia, they undoubtedly enjoy a privileged status as Global Northerners. Their very participation in The Gambia's tourism-based sexual economy "keeps business thriving" for these young Gambian men.

My participant-observation has revealed that chanters are guys who are working to make ends meet, while at the same searching for opportunities that could propel their emigration to the Global North. They hang around beaches, tourists' hotels, restaurants trying to ignite some kind of relationship with almost always white Global North tourists who primarily visit the country on prepaid holiday packages. As cosmopolitan young men, they dress in a variety of Global North pieces of clothing (jeans, t-shirts, shorts, shirts) often purchased at second hand clothes stands, or clothing received from tourists when they are leaving the country. However, on Fridays, many chanters can be seen wearing traditional clothing such as kaftan as most Gambians do when they attend Friday prayers (*Jumma*) at the mosque.

Many young chanters wear locs, which they put it in a dread hat (knitted hats in Rasta colors), others simply wear them out. For the Chanters, having locs is an asset for attracting female tourists, especially those from the U.K. who have a preference for guys with locs. Many of these young men began growing locs to be more "marketable." This, I believe, is related to these women's exposure to the tourism-based sexual economy in the Caribbean, especially Jamaica, where I suspect some of them came in contact with beach guys referred to as "rent-a-dreads," "rentie," or "rastitute" (see Albuquerque 1998; Kempadoo 1999; O'Connell Davidsion and Sanchez Taylor 1999; Pruitt and LaFont 1999). While most young women interested in meeting male Global North tourists are relegated to bars and restaurants, Chanters are any and everywhere tourists are. During

my fieldwork, hanging around different groups of chanters drinking attaya together in tourist spots on the beaches, I recorded the many lines chanters use to approach tourists.

One that came back often went like this:

Hello, how are you? Excuse me, my friend? Welcome to The Gambia! Where are you from? What is your name? Where are you staying? Would you like a taxi? Do you need a tour guide?

These lines of questionings generally come with the chanters walk towards Global North tourists, extending a hand forward hoping a handshake. Handshakes are common in Gambian ways of greetings, so chanters socio-cultural norms of greeting via handshake is used in their interactions with tourists. Such a physical contact can also presage—if it does happen—if a relationship is possible. Handshakes can also be seen as harassment by some tourists, an annoyance particularly if they are not interested in what is being offered. As they approach tourists, chanters come with a smile, and if ignored by the tourists, they utilize the Gambia Tourist Board's slogan of "The Smiling Coast" by saying "this is the smiling coast of Africa, we are friendly people, it's nice to be nice!" The Gambia's tourism slogan evokes the ideas that everyone is smiling in The Gambia, that Gambians are just friendly. That government message places Gambians in a servicing position vis-à-vis tourists, their feelings and expectations. For those tourists interested in what the Chanters are offering, they accept the taxi services, go to a local restaurant suggested by the chanter, or are taken to exchange their money in the black market. Offering such services to tourists gives chanters the chance to interact and solidify the encounter.

Anyone who walks around the TDA at any time of the day is able to come across an older white woman walking side by side, and sometimes holding hand, with a much younger, physically fit Gambian men. As one 58 year old English women said to Christine Aziz: “You don’t ask for sex but the men seem to know you want it. They say things like, ‘would you like to see the real Africa?’” (Aziz 1994:12).

One of my assiduous Chanter informants was Mo. He was a 35 years old tourist-taxi driver (they are green instead of the yellow of regular taxis). He had been working in the tourism industry since 1999. He was a Fula from a village upriver on the North bank. He came to the Kololi area with the project of finishing school in one of the two major high schools. Not really knowing anyone in the urban area, Mo had to use his smarts to navigate the landscape, which led him to find his way to St. Augustine High School to talk to the Principal. Awarded a small scholarship, he continued his education. After high school, he got a small job with a foreign aid agency. That agency shut its doors, eventually. Out of work, he was encouraged by some of his male friends to go to the beach and try his luck. His arrival at the Palma Rima beach landed him a job in a restaurant. After integrating a network or group of chanters who hanged out together, Mo eventually became a tourist-taxi driver and a tour guide. Over the years, while working as a driver and a guide, he met and developed relationships with female tourists-toubabs. As a guide and a taxi driver, he secured a relatively stable income. He kept alive his goal of migrating to the Global North. He worked to cultivate friendships with tourists by helping them. If they were formed couples of toubabs, he took them to the local market, restaurants, to shopping around helping negotiating prices. If the female toubab came

alone and was looking for a “relationship,” he would engage in the sexual liaison as expected.

Scholars have noted that in an informal tourism economy there always exist a wide range of activities and exchanges between tourists and locals that are more or less directly centered on sexual-economic exchanges (Brennan 2004; Brown 1992 Cabezas 2004; Meiu 2017; Nyanzi et al 2005; Nyanzi & Bah). Guys like Mo, who have received a formal education are unable to gain or have meaningful employment in the tourism industry. As such, they have to find other means to make a living in the industry. In her examination of the tourism industry in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, Cabezas (2009) highlighted the fact that the tourism industry labor force actively exploits workers and marginalizes many young people, who are left out from employment in the formal sector. In a country that already suffers from acute youth unemployment, many young Gambian find themselves unable able to get a decent job in the formal sector of the tourism industry even if they have had formal education. The Gambia’s precarious economic situation is characterized by high youth under-employment or unemployment. In their efforts to engaged and participate in the global economy indirectly, they build relationships with foreign tourists by using their young bodies as embodied capital, often the only “resource” at their disposal (Cabezas 2002 & 2008; Meiu 2017; Padilla 2007; Sanchez-Taylor 2006). I will go back to Mo’s story at the end of this section.

Another chanter I interacted with many times was Bakari, a 34 years old married man from Lamine: a para-urban 30 minute- drive away from the Kololi Beach area. He works as a gardener and a handyman in an apartment complex that caters to tourists. Bakari left Lamine because he wanted more opportunities for himself. After completing

primary school, he was encouraged by some of his boys to come to the beach area to try his luck at the age of 19. As a novice, Bakari had to learn on the job in the art of “chanting” He had to learn the ropes of the trade so to speak, as being in the field. As he says it himself, he was schooled by some chanter elders who taught him how to approached tourists, the phrases he needed to say and how. Besides speaking English well enough to be able to interact with Anglophone tourists, experienced chanters tend to also have a working knowledge of French, Swedish, German, and Dutch. So that when they approach tourists, they are able to communicate in the language of the tourists from the very beginning of the interaction, which is a very important moment in the history of the (hopefully) relation-to-be. This education is very important for chanters for it could mean success or failure, your ability to eat or go about being hungry. At times, those in that situation rob tourists to be able to eat.

Bakari’s skills eventually landed him a job working first as a waiter and later as a security guard in one of the beach hotels in Kololi. This is when he had his first opportunity to meet a female toubab. He shared with me that ha had been approached by older white female tourists in their 50s, 60s, and 70s from the U.K., Holland, Germany and Sweden. They all said that they wanted to develop a friendship with him. When explaining how these relationships begin, Bakari commented on how European women would promise to help financially but never really did, even though—in Bakari’s words—they took advantage of his body. Bakari said:

First of all, they will see you young and strong and they come and say that they like you. And you the fool, will go with them. They know that when they come here, they can get us in bed because they can’t get a man in their country. This is

why they come here, this is why they come to Africa, everybody knows that Africa is poor, and we are poor. So they come and flash their money, some may even give you their money to hold for them while they are in The Gambia if they really like you, just to keep you. In being with them, you hope that by the time their vacation is over, they will give you something, nice things, buy you a used car, give you their remaining pocket money, or even give a visa sponsorship. But most of the time they don't do any of that (interview December 2015).

Bakari's statement reveals the motives of many Global North female tourists who visit the country assuming a position rather similar to the one taken by Global North male tourists who come to The Gambia to enjoy sexual and affective exchanges with both young Gambian men and women. In "Sex Tourism: Do Women Do It Too?" (2003), Sheila Jeffreys argues that it is important to make a distinction between men's "sex tourism" and women's "romance tourism" in her view these parallels were politically problematic because it serve to degender prostitution by arguing that "women do it too" (Jeffreys 2003:225). From the perspective of this research, I think that it is fair to say that Jeffreys' preoccupations are moot, because many literatures on tourism-sexual economies have highlighted and underscored the fact that Global North tourists, regardless of gender, engage in tourism-based sexual economies even if they don't acknowledge such participation (see Frohlick 2013; Kempadoo 1999; Kibicho 2009; Jacobs 2010; Nyanzi et al 2005; Sanchez-Taylor 2006). As Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor (2006) aptly noted, the very fact that these parallels (male-female sex tourism) are overlooked "reflects and reproduces weaknesses in existing theoretical and commonsense understandings of

gendered power, sexual exploitation, prostitution and sex tourism” (Sanchez Taylor 2006:44).

Langboy is a 30 years old taxi driver and bartender. He arrived in Kotu beach in 2004 after finishing high school. At first, he worked as a youth worker. He decided to quit his job because he wasn't making enough money. He then tried his luck at the beach. He made that decision because he figured he would make more money working at the beach than as a youth worker. Echoing the sentiment expressed by Bakari and many of the more experienced chanters, Langboy said:

Some of the toubabs come here in what is called sex trade visits. These women come here to use their money as weapons. They know that we are poor, so they use their money to get what they want from us, our bodies (Interview November 2015).

Langboy and many other chanters interviewed revealed the fact that although the majority of them do indeed approach the tourists first, in some cases Global North tourists are the one to solicit them to satisfy their appetite for exotic sex with black men. Indeed many Global North female tourists use their monetary resources to hook chanters to them, even going so far at times to giving their money to their chanter to hold for them. This is a way to make the chanters aware of the kind of money they are carrying with them, without even having to say it. Silence can sometimes be the best way to accompany a message that is otherwise communicated through a “non-linguistic language.” I am also convinced that these women give the chanters their money to hold because they want to give an opportunity to the chanter to perform some kind of masculine role—serving as the provider by paying the bill (with her money) at

restaurants and bars. This is a detail considered by the more experienced tourists who are aware of the Gambian socio-sexual norms. During fieldwork, there were several occasions when I observed chanters holding the cross-body bags (carrying the money) of their female toubab friends. My participant-observation revealed, along with my attentively “overhearing” Global North female tourists’ conversations among themselves, that female toubabs have no problem discussing their conquests and exchanging information about their Gambian guys. In fact, one afternoon, while sitting at a bar conducting fieldwork, one female tourist said to the waitress jokingly that she needed a Gambian boy, a rasta, while laughing. The waitress did not hesitate to tell her that she knows a nice boy that she could call. Without waiting for an additional confirmation from the female toubab, the waitress called the guy and he showed up to talk to the lady. I tried to strike a conversation with the lady, but she completely ignored me. After the toubab left with her Gambian boy, I engaged the waitress about the whole exchange. She told me that she simply had called her own boyfriend to be with her. She added that this is an arrangement that she didn’t mind facilitating because whatever opportunity that comes out of this contact, he will share with her because they are a couple. This waitress was not different than the majority of the relatives and partners of chanters, who all tend to not mind or be jealous their men/chanters engage in strategic affective-sexual relationships with toubabs. They know that this is a kind of work and expect a trickle down effect to them from that labor.

Mohammad, a 35 years old chanter from Brikama, has been working in and around the Kololi beach area for about 15 years as a waiter and security guard in hotels and restaurants. This is how he met female toubabs:

Well working in the restaurants and hotels in Kololi, I have met female tourists from Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Germany and the U.K. I have engaged in relationships with them. In being in a relationship with them, things can get complicated because they demand a lot from you. In exchange for their demands, you often don't get a lot from them. You may get a cell phone, money, and perhaps if you are lucky a second hand car (Interview December 2015).

In recounting his stories with toubabs, Mohammad was proud to let me know that he was self-employed because he drives his own taxi, a second hand car that he received from his Belgian toubab. For many of the chanters, their friendships with female toubabs entail a whole host of exchanges, over the course of the tourists' visits, of which "friendship" might be continue even after the tourist returns to her country. There are cases when the toubab comes back to The Gambia to be with her chanter(s).

Chanters pursue female tourists with the short-term goal of getting gifts such as money, food, phones, computer, remittance, and a used car. This being said, they all share the same long-term goal: to get a visa sponsorship that could enable emigration to the global north. According to Nyanzi et al (2005), chanters are charged with "sleeping their way out of The Gambia with old White women" (2005:563). This statement expresses well the situation on the ground as I observed it, thanks to participant-observation and interviews with both chanters and tourists engaged in similar discourse. There is no doubt about it: chanters use sex with female toubabs strategically to hopefully facilitate their migration to the Global North, which they envision to be filled of opportunities, unlike the Gambian context. I think that when thinking about the chanters-Global North tourists script, one should also consider other kinds of arrangements. Take

for instance the story of Cherif, whose friendship with his female toubab was not only sexual since they also agreed to be business partners.

Cherif is a 28 years old married men from Brikama. He came to the beach to make a living. In Brikama, he wasn't able to make ends meet. After seeking friends of his come back with their taxis and other things, his friends told him that in Kololi, the toubabs often help people. He decided to join them. The statement according to which "toubabs help people" is no accident because most of the chanters actually approach toubabs as "friends" who can help them. Such disposition of the chanters is in fact aligned with a socio-cultural understanding of "friendship" and "kinship ties" according to which those who are well-off should help those who are not. This is what Paulla Ebron refers to as "patronage relationships" (Ebron 2002). Since toubabs are racially identified with wealth and live in lands filled with opportunities, chanters expect that their wealthy toubabs will help them improve their life conditions, even if this comes at the cost of opening up access to their young bodies. Cherif recounts having to share the profits of his taxi business with his British female "friend":

When I arrived here, I used to drive my friend's taxi, because he got a chance to leave for England. My friend introduced me to a female friend of his, who took a liking for me and decided to buy a taxi and give it to me. I told her that I was not a bumster and she said that she just wanted to help me and that we can do business together, where I can drive the taxi and we share the profit. During this time, we began a relationship, I would send her half of the profit and I kept the rest. But she became complicated and jealous, which ended our relationship. At that point she told me to sell the car and send her the money back. I told her no because this

is how I make my living, and that if she wanted to sell the car and then she needed to come back and sell it herself. She never made it, so I kept driving the car until it broke down (Interview December 2015).

Cherif's story reveals additional entanglements that take shape between chanters and white female tourists. Being in a long distance relationship is difficult and for many of these women, they have to face the reality of being with young men who may be desiring to be with young women who they share socio-cultural norms and practices with. They must also be aware of the fact that their chanters are seeking other female toubabs like them to get "more help." I very often witnessed chanters constantly having to reassure their "friends" of their loyalty and dedication to them. This feeling of insecurity of the female toubabs makes it very difficult for chanters to even interact with young female Gambians to avoid upsetting their female toubabs. There were several times during fieldwork when I had to act as if I didn't know a particular chanter when they were with a new toubab friend, because failure to do so could possibly have them lose the opportunity they are working on. When I approached some chanters to talk to me, many often responded that they would have to check with their toubabs over the phone first, so that they can maintain their friendship intact.

For the chanters, getting your female toubab to buy you a taxi (a used car) and send you remittances can bring you a momentary success in the game, while you wait for the coveted price of being able to get a visa. The most experienced of the chanters knows that even if you get a visa sponsorship, the chances of being denied are extremely high. Some of the chanters who participated in this study tried their chances in getting a visa entry to the United States, the U.K., Denmark, Canada, France, Sweden, etc Many of the

guys I interviewed took pride in letting me know that they were self-employed. Being self-employed meant that you did something right, even if the ultimate goal is to migrate to Europe, you managed to make a living for yourself by owning a taxi. Self-employment provides them respect from their peers and family members.

The chanters - white female tourists script is often depicted as an intergenerational sexual liaisons because much older white female tourists with an age gap of up to 30 years in age do visit the country. However, there are instances when the age gap is not that huge. Take Famz's story. Famz met a woman from the U.K. who was only 7 years older than him. Famz was 27 years old at the time. He began a relationship with her while working as a security guard at the hotel she was staying in. At first, she was very nice and laid-back. She would come to talk to him while he was working and they would go out every day during her two weeks stay in The Gambia. She would get drunk and he would have to take care of her, and very often she demanded that he drink with her, an offer he often refused. She would then tell him "I don't trust a man who doesn't drink!" He often replied: "I'm Muslim, we don't drink, it's *haram!*" Many of my interviewees echoed this. Tourists would encourage them to drink alcohol as a way to loosen up. During my fieldwork, many of the Chanters told me that they didn't drink because they are Muslims, and that they only smoke weed. However, during many nights spent at the bars, I was able to observe these same guys drinking Julbrew, the country's local beer. This is the way they socialized with their toubabs partners, going to bars, eating, dancing, drinking and perhaps taking tokes at a joint, and eventually engaging sex.

Famz admitted that during his relationship with the U.K. woman, they had unprotected sex several times because she had told him that she was on birth control.

According to Famz, she was lying because she later admitted that she wanted to have a child. The relationship continued upon her return to the U.K. They often communicated via Viber or Facebook. He wanted to be present for the birth of their child. He asked her to write him an invitation letter so that he could try to get a visa to visit the U.K. However, she refused, stating that she didn't want to be used in that way, and that if he gets the chance to come to the U.K., he would certainly leave her anyway. This brought Famz to end the relationship because he couldn't believe that she would do that to him. Famz was devastated and ashamed to tell his family that he has a daughter in the U.K. He has no real relationship with his daughter and has no means to fight for his paternal rights. In my many flights to The Gambia, many white European women and their mixed race children pack the plane. For many of these women, having a baby with a black man is desirable because it sets them apart from their neighbors back home. Having a mixed race baby serves as some sort of trophy from their travel conquest. However, many of the children's fathers are not involved in their lives for the very reasons that Famz expressed above: these women never had the intention to share parental responsibilities with their Gambian lovers. Rather, they just wanted to provide them with the necessary sperm for them to accomplish their plans to have a mixed race trophy baby. Their "Global Northness" placed them in a position of relative power vis-à-vis their Gambian lovers, which meant that they are able to dictate the conditions and level of Gambian paternal involvement in the lives of their children. As for the local Gambian man, they somehow expect that having a child would help solidify the relationship, which in turn will speed up the process to migration to the West. However, disappointment comes when they are faced with the reality that the women do not intend for them to make a family nor have

them be part of their child's life. This reality is a source of stress, embarrassment and disappointment for the chanters, who are seen as guys unable to seize their opportunity and as a failure in the eyes of their friends and family. Some Global North tourists do their best to maintain the relationship with the chanters. A few bring the kid for a holiday or even work to help the father migrate to Europe, however.

Sex and drug use are the most contentious issues tied to the chanters. This quite often puts them in a vulnerable position with the tourism security forces. Though in many parts of The Gambia smoking ganja is quite tolerable and many in the security apparatus turn a blind eye and do not enforce anti-drug laws when drug use is tied to tourists. What has been shocking to now in The Gambia has been to see junkies hooked on cocaine, crack and heroine in many parts of town in the Kombo St. Mary. Traffic in illicit drugs has become part of the tourism industry. Traffic in cocaine and heroin is causing havoc in the lives of some chanters, who don't have the opportunity to enter a drug rehabilitation program. From the chanters point of view the use of illicit drugs was brought to country by the tourists. Here is Ebu's opinion on the matter:

Some toubabs use drugs such as coke as a way to entice the boys. When they leave, you're left in a mess. That's how so some of the boys become addicts (interview December 2016).

It is important to note that many of these tourists are coming from countries where many of these illicit drugs are used. So for them, seeking to obtain and use these drugs is a normal part of enhancing one's holiday experiences. Some tourists will go out of their way to find chanters who can provide them access to these drugs. In many of the bars and night clubs visited by tourists, one can see chanters and tourists alike smoking marijuana

openly. There are now two reggae clubs that are favored by chanters who like to bring there their white female tourist friends, particularly when they want to solidify relationships. Most Gambians are aware of the existence of these venues. In fact, it is often said that these are clubs that “bumsters” go to with their toubabs to have a good time, these are places no respectable Gambian should be seen in. Well, I visited both venues and I must confirm that these two clubs are filled with chanters and their old white female friends. One of the main features of these venues is the roots reggae music blasted by a Gambian DJ with a fake Jamaican patois accent who is dressed in full Rastafarian gear. In these clubs, you get to see old tired looking white women slow dancing with their much younger physically fit Gambian guys. The sight of old white women in their 50s and up gyrating on the groins of these young men is quite a scene, for it reminds one of the notion of liminality, where rules of socio-sexual norms are suspended within the tourism industry, and where certain behaviors usually forbidden in normal time and place are somewhat permitted or tolerated. As a woman who lives in Miami, Florida, it is hard-pressed to find young black guys dancing like that with much older white women in clubs. These are images I have only seen in abundance when I come to The Gambia.

Helen, a 62 years old woman from Kent, in the U.K., said that she has been coming to The Gambia for several years now. She first visited the country with her then husband. During that trip, she engaged in a sexual liason with a chanter. Ever since then, she has been coming and making contact with chanters. Helen said the following in trying to explain her motivations to come to The Gambia sometimes twice in a year:

I don't come to Africa for sex, I come here for love, the people and the land. Men my age back home are not looking for women like me. But here, young men appreciate me. I see no problem with it, ain't it? I see and know a lot of women who pay for sex, but me I don't pay. My guy doesn't ask me for money and I am the one who decides what gift I want to give him (Interview January 2016).

The white female tourists such as Helen who participated in this study narrated the same story to me: they are not looking for sex, they are looking for love, true love. Others even go so far as to say that people are very poor in The Gambia and that tourists from the Global North have the means to help the poor Gambians, so why not let them do it? The important thing to consider is that the exchange rate is always favorable to tourists. And tourists take advantage of it, even though they are far from being the rich people some Gambians might think they are. Many of the female tourists are of working class to lower middle class origin in their country and are unable to live up to the ideal of being a wealthy Westerner. In fact many of the more experienced chanters I spoke to were aware of the fact that some of these women are living on their retirement pension, and could not therefore give them much more money. So if a woman is not able to give or send money, she is asked to write an invitation letter her chanter. At times, a chantor might be able to come up with the money to buy a plane ticket if he gets the necessary visa. The chanters tend to be in tune with the actual financial realities of many the female toubabs who visit the country.

When the issue of sexual intercourse came up in my conversations with chanters, my interlocutors often grinded and said something to the effect that it is not nice to think that you are going to bed with your mom or grandmother. Some said that to facilitate

their performances, they drink a lot of alcohol. I suspect that for many of these guys, it was very difficult to talk to me—a Gambian female—and that who I am greatly influenced their answers. So I had to be very ingenious to phrase and rephrase my questions so that I the chanters would not feel the need to have to justify themselves to me, who was eventually like a sister to them, as we spoke in Wolof. I often entered in the subject matter by asking them how different it was to be intimate with their toubab friends as opposed to being intimate with a Gambian woman. Muntou, a 28 years old chanter said:

When you are intimate with them, they like to demand a lot, things like oral sex. That is something I just don't think I can do. I would often kiss them with the exception of going down there, I'm just not used to it. I don't go down. This is the difference between toubabs and Gambians. Gambian women will not make demands while you are sleeping with them, while the toubabs will (Interview January 2016)

Landing, a 32 years old chanter said:

Well, okay, me, I feel like it's a little bit the same. For me I don't like 'frag, frag and am done.' I like to take my time and make sure that we are both enjoying ourselves. I am not like these boys who just get on top and do their thing. I like to take my time, giving the woman the change to enjoy herself, especially when I like her. The only difference I would say between the toubabs and the Gambian is that the toubabs like to make a lot of loud noises and moves all kinds of ways. The toubabs will scream and the Gambians don't do that (Interviewed December 2015).

I heard versions of these statements from many chanters I spoke to. From these conversations, it appears that the toubabs tend to be more sexually adventurous than local Gambian women are. This view was not at all surprising to me, for it spoke to Gambian sayings that posit white people to be more sexually open and deviant than Africans. It is strange to hear Gambians say things like “toubabs are nasty,” they have sex in all kinds of way and involve every parts of their bodies. These ideas are what some scholars (Jacobs 2010; Thomas 2005) have referred too as “Occidentalism,” a reversal of “Orientalism,” where one image the racial other as sexually different, and capable of an unimaginable sexual behaviors. These saying do not take into consideration the fact that Global North tourists are living their vacations liminally, which makes them able to demand certain sexual favors and get tem, as opposed to Gambian menwho continue to live in a non-liminal reality. These female tourists don’t have to deal with the stigma nor the disapproval that many older Gambian women face when they engage in sexual liaisons with toyboys.

Another aspect of chanter and female toubabs’ engaging in sex is that all the chanters I spoke to denied performing oral sex on their toubab friends. They made these claims as if they wanted to share a general aversion to performing oral sex on anyone, toubab or Gambians. Some expressed disgust at the idea. Others indicated that they can’t do it because of issues of cleanliness related to Islam, ablution, and the way in which Muslims clean their bodies. They highlight the fact that in Western cultures, people don’t clean themselves with water every time they go to the toilet. While in the Gambia, as an Islamic society, everyone is expected to clean temselves with water each time. It is common to see a kettle full of water or a bucket of water in the toilet, for users to clean

themselves afterward. For these reasons, all the chanters wanted to make sure that I, a Gambian interlocutor, would not think of them as performing cunnilinguses.

The relationships between chanters and female toubabs are filled with potential misunderstandings due to cultural differences. Both come to the interaction with their respective cultural scenarios, which they adapt to the situation they have to go through. Many of these female toubabs engage in affective-sexual exchanges with their chanters with their normative Global North model of heterosexual relations in terms of the right to sexual exclusivity for the couple. While for Gambian chanters, being a Muslim man and having several wives is part of Gambian socio-religious norms. I am always fascinated to read headlines in British newspapers and blogs written by Global North women that claim that “bumsters” are polygamous and that their older white female lovers are always so disappointed to discover that they have a wife in The Gambia. Considering that most global north female tourists do not pay attention to Gambian socio-sexual norms or take the time to talk to local Gambian women, they have no idea that Gambian society permits men to have up to four wives. The fact that these Global North women think that the Muslim chanters they engage with are somehow immune to polygyny is for me flabbergasting. Either these women are naïve or they are so convinced of their superiority over local women that they simply could not consider that they could compete with Gambian women for the attention of the chanters. Many female toubabs are reluctant to accept or understand Gambian socio-sexual norms. They want their Gambian chanters to suspend their interpersonal relationships with other Gambians and adhere to Global North socio-sexual norms that give exclusive sexual rights to the parties involved in a couple relationships.

One of the most surprising aspects of this research was certainly to find out how much such scorned toubab lovers engage in social media forums to discredit the characters of chanters, who they label as “cheaters,” “con-artists,” “criminals,” and “liars.” In general images of chanters are “constructed around the notions of mistrust, criminals, deceit, and disingenuousness” (Lawson and Jaworski 2007:79). When one googles the word “bumster,” one gets a flurry of blogs and articles that depict Gambian chanters as such, which can potentially create a problem for the Gambian tourism industry. This brings back the issue of power inequality in the chanter-female toubab script, where Global North tourists come with the ability to access the global media and have their voices heard, something that the chanters could not even dream of doing. One is able to read stories about chanters cheating and taking advantage of Western women: “Am I the Stupidest Woman in Britain? I was dumped by Gambian toyboy love-rat and Now I’m marrying another” (Mirror May 3, 2014); “Birds Flock and Gigolos Hustle in The Gambia” (Fehr, Georgia Straight Vancouver’s News & Entertainment Weekly, March 12, 2008); “She’s the granny who wed a Gambian waiter 35 years her junior, then found he only wanted a British visa. Here, she tells how she’s taking delicious revenge” (Courtenay, Mailonline, October 20 2010); and from a Blog, “Dangers of Falling for a Gambian Beach Boy: The Gambia and its Cheating Boyfriends-Check out your Bumster here” (Posted Aug 4 2014 by Wottraveltwickenham). As a result, chanters become a target of intense campaigns led by the Gambian state to reduce and eliminate what is perceived to be their negative activities supposedly at the margins of the tourism industry (see the work of Nyanzi et al. 2005; Ebron 2002). The late 1980s and early 1990s were the first time the Gambian state took actions to deal with the so-called “bumster issue”

(Bah et al 2005; McCombes 2008). At the time, the country was headed by President Jawara. His government treated the “chanters phenomenon” as an issue of youth truancy and antisocial and criminal behaviors. As such, the youth needed to be disciplined by the police and the community at large. This resulted in the creation of a tourism police unit that had for principal mandate to protect tourists from chanters (Bah et al 2005; Brown 1992). This policy was ratcheted up by the Jammeh’s regime. The coup that brought him to power brought many tourists to stop coming to The Gambia. They did so not so much because the country had become dangerous. They stopped coming because Global North countries convinced their citizens that The Gambia was dangerous. Jammeh’s coup brought the near collapse of the tourism industry. Reigniting it quickly became a priority for the new military government. In 1994, Jammeh took measures to discourage the youth to work in the tourism area. The government had weekly programs that brought awareness of the “bumster” issue on West Coast Radio and a column in *The Observer*, one of the leading newspapers in the country. These approaches didn’t end the issue of “bomsing” because it failed to deal with the fundamental issue the Gambian youth was suffering from: the lack of jobs and opportunities. The Gambian Ministry of Tourism and Culture in 1996 established the “Roots Heritage Festival,” held an election and created a new constitution to signal a move to civilian government in order to soften the Gambian government’s image. When these changes didn’t improve the industry, and pressed by European tour operators (Thomas Cook, Discovery Tours; African Adventures Tours), who are the major stakeholders of the Gambian tourism industry, Jammeh and his government decided to scapegoat chanters by imposing harsher disciplinary measures against them and their activities.

Jammeh's regime took the policing of tourism and the protection of tourists to a level that militarized the TDA. The regime inaugurated the Tourism Security Unit (TSU), which was mandated to patrol and set up security checkpoints on every beach entrances in the TDA (Bungalow Beach (BB), Palma Rima beach, Fajara beach and Senegambia beach). Besides setting these security checkpoints, the TSU moved to destroy beach bars along the beaches, and arbitrarily arrested suspected "bumsters," all in the name of protecting tourists and the tourism industry. Many of these early chanters were sent to the Fajara military barracks, where soldiers beat them severely, shaved their locs and then sent them to work at several public works projects. Many were sent to work in Jammeh's personal farms. These aggressive moves were met with a lot of disapproval by the youth and their mothers, who stand to benefit from their labor (see Brown 1992). The public pressure brought the regime to enroll some of these guys in youth work programs. Several were trained and given badges and uniform to work as tour guides in the tourism industry. However, since these jobs were limited and didn't pay very well, many worked to supplement their income by resuming to "bomsing". (Nyanzi et al 2005; Wright 2005).

While these programs were being implemented, policies were being drafted to criminalize "bumsters" and their activities with the passing of the Tourism Offences Act, 2003. The section that criminalized chanters activities are outlined in Section 3: sub-sections A-C, which states the following:

A person who –

- a) follows a tourist with the intention of begging, harassing, or hassling a tourists;
- b) Stalks, threaten or insults a tourist; or

- c) Loiters, wanders or idles in a Tourism Development Area or its environs or in areas frequented by tourists, including a beach and restaurants, for the purpose of begging, following, stalking or harassing a tourist.

Individuals that are found to be guilty and convicted could be asked to pay up to ten thousand dalasis in fine or face up to two years of imprisonment and/or both. This is a fine that many of these chanters could not afford to pay at all. The offence gives a lot of leeway to the Tourism Security Unit to pick up anyone they suspect of violating this act, which could potentially be any Gambian seen in and around the TDA without a badge or a uniform. In my interview with Captain Manneh, Officer Commanding the Tourist Security Unit since 2009, he explained that their job was to secure the tourism industry and weed out criminality, which he sees as a big problem for the tourism industry. Captain Manneh further explained that they just don't arrest bad elements, they also serve as escorts to tourists, and security for cruise ships and night patrols in the TDA. As Captain Manneh reminded me:

Our job is to control the prostitutes, bumsters, drug traffickers, child sex abusers and all the bad things they bring to the tourism industry and the country; this is our main goal, which is mandated in the Tourism Offences Act of 2003 (Interview December 2016).

It is significant that Captain Manneh's statement lumps together a series of "bad" actors, which erases the complexity of the reality on the ground. That is the unwillingness of the State and of many Gambians to admit and recognize the reality that many Gambian adults chose as a self-employment option to engage willingly in the tourism-based sexual economy, which is not an illegal activity in The Gambia. However, rather than dealing

with this reality, the Gambian State, the Gambian Tourism Board, and the consultants who prepare tourism policy recommendations (the 2005 Tourism Master Plan) usually funded by Global North travel groups, all share a fundamental denial about the fact that many young Gambians are indeed engaged in sex work with tourists. When I pressed Captain Manneh on this issue by alerting him to the fact that “prostitution” is not illegal in The Gambia, he replied that “it is immoral and it has no place in our society” (Interview December 2016). This underscores the general motivations behind the criminalization of those working in the tourism-based sexual economy in Section 3 of the Tourism Offences Act, 2003. Captain Manneh further explained that changes had been made to the 2003 Act because they had difficulties prosecuting those individuals who were assumed to be violating activities outlined in Section 3 of the Act. The amendment passed now allows Manneh and his security forces to be more successful in their prosecution of “bumsters” at the Tourism Offences Tribunal. The amendments substantially increased the amount of the fines those convicted must pay (Amendment of Section 3). These amendments were signs of desperate times for Jammeh and his regime’s financial woes. Along with these hefty fines that Gambians can’t afford, the amendment established a special tribunal charged to deal with tourism related crimes that would help them prosecute accusers successfully.

M. Jacqui Alexander (1991) has shown how much the state has the “capacity to create new political constituencies by criminalizing certain kinds of sexual behaviors” (1991:147). In The Gambia, laws construct the men and the women who engage in sex work and in same-sex activities as operating outside of Gambian socio-sexual norms and legality, which gives the state the legal prerogative to discipline them and punish them

for their “criminal” activities. This is especially true for Gambian men who have sex with men (MSM) (see the last section of this chapter). Such legal architecture creates second-class citizens whose sexual activities make them target-of-choice for harassment by the security forces, which incarcerate them because they transgress socio-sexual norms and breach the law.

The criminalization of chanters and their activities must be related to the regime’s inability to keep its promise of economic prosperity, which has left many young people to find creative ways to improve their life chances in a country that provides so little for them. When chanters decide to engage in sex work with toubabs in the tourism-based sexual economy, emigration remains the greatest prize. As Lamin shared with me:

For me there is always hope that things will get better. I am not one of these boys that thinks that the toubabs will help them get better. I wish to have my own things one day and help myself and my family. I don’t necessarily need to go abroad. I leave everything to Allah. When Allah decides that my life will be better then it will happen. So I leave everything up to the will of Allah (Interview December 2015).

The hope for a better life thanks to migration is also fueled by stories of boys making it to Europe, where they were able to work and save money to send remittances to their families and even buy properties. In many parts of the coastal area, there are a lot of beautifully constructed houses by Semesters who went to Europe thanks to their contacts with global north tourists. As Padilla (2007) observed in the Dominican Republic, “men are able to overcome the stigma of sex work by financially contributing to the family, a practice that fits dominant notions of men as providers” (2007:118). This is especially

true also in the Gambian context. Thanks to their engagement in sex work with female toubabs, chanters are able to provide and contribute to the wellbeing of their families, and in that way they do indeed perform ideal masculinity. This sets them apart from their female counterparts, who are permanently locked into a sex worker identity that they just can't shake off as women. Gambian socio-sexual gendered norms allow chanters to transform themselves into respectable men, a Kilifa, once they make it and become breadwinners.

And for those who are unable to successfully gain the coveted price of getting a visa to emigrate to Europe, some sadly take the "backway," the so-often-deadly transnational journey to Libya, and then hopefully across the Mediterranean to hopefully get to Europe. As Muntou said to me:

Things are hard and getting every time more difficult. So many boys are thinking of making it to Europe by the backway. Many now are losing hope and they think that by going to Libya or Morocco, they can get to Europe by boat. Some of the boys have sold everything to take the backway because they have no hope here (Interview December 2016).

The new reality that chanters have had to pay attention to recently are the many horror stories of young Gambians taking the "backway" to die at sea in the Mediterranean or to be enslaved in Libya. For them, whose faith has been broken, the realization that they can no longer depend on tourists for help in their effort to emigrate to Europe, they are left with nothing more than a deadly alternative. And for those who can't take either route due to financial constraints, the stress of life can become too much to handle, and eventually cause mental breakdowns. During my fieldwork, many chanters spoke about

guys going crazy because they had lost faith. Their lack of opportunities to leave the country and migrate to the Global North has brought them to a psychological condition they call the “nerves syndrome.” During my fieldwork, I heard so many Gambian men say that they are stressed trying to manage their lives.

Once in a blue moon, luck strikes and a few do make it to the promise land. I end this section with the story of Mo, whose story I began this section with. After working in the tourism-based sexual economy for over 14 years to service female tourists, and suffering visa rejections from several embassies, Mo finally got the opportunity to emigrate to Europe. When I went to The Gambia to finalize my fieldwork in 2016, I went back to check out my group of chanters at Palma Rima beach. They were happy to tell me that Mo had made it to Europe. He immigrated to Switzerland. This happened when Mo befriended a Swedish woman on Facebook. The woman liked him and decided to solidify their relationship by having him migrate to Switzerland to be with her. This time, Mo was given a visa. In narrating what they saw as Mo’s success story, the guys expressed joy at the fact that one of them made it. Some were gleaning with envy wondering when their luck would come so that they could emigrate to the Global North. I was personally very happy to hear that Mo had “made it” because I knew how much he wanted that to happen. I wondered how he was making it in a strange cold land... I spent a lot of time with him over the years. He told me that he wanted to write a book about his experiences as a chanter, I certainly hope that he gets the opportunity to do so.

The guys who get “lucky” and emigrate to the West often face many hardships. From the work of Ulla Wagner and Bawa Yamba (1986), we learn that many of the Gambian men who arrive in Sweden, whose tickets were paid by their “Swedish friend,”

often get a rude awakening as soon as they arrive on a visitor's visa (1986:206). Many find it difficult to get permanent residency so that they can fulfill their dreams by working and making enough money without having to engage in illegal underground activities. Since immigration laws are rigid in Scandinavian countries, they are often at the mercy of their toubab sponsors. Some are even held as sex slaves and shared amongst the female toubab's friends. The Gambian emigrants face much vulnerability. They lack access to social services and are subjected to discrimination. They only have little legal rights if any (Wagner and Yamba 1986).

### **Gambian Men Who Have Sex With Men (MSM) in the Gambian Sexscape**

Africanists have shown that same-sex intimacy and relationships have been features of African societies, in that way debunking a myth very popular in Africa according to which homosexuality is an import from the Global North (Murray and Roscoe 1998; Morgan and Wieringa 2005; Epprecht 2006; Gaudio 2009; Nyeck & Epprecht 2013). In the Gambia, same sex intimacy and relationships exist indeed, but in secrecy, for fear of stigma, ostracism and homophobic violence. Men who have sex with men also engage in affective, social, and economic exchanges with their lovers and lovers' friends. Although MSM is an etic term derived from the discipline of public health, I used it in this dissertation because my same-sex behaving interlocutors used the terms at times to describe themselves. However, it is important to note that many of my interlocutors were participants in an HIV/AIDS and STIs prevention program and as such they had already been exposed to this public health terminology. Another important note is that within the Ministry of Health, Jammeh's government decided to use the term MSM rather than using "homosexuals," "queer," or "gay" in the prevention literature and reports as I

suspect this is a way to avoid admitting that same-sex relations exist in the country. Usually, these men conceal their sexuality by engaging in relationships with women, which allows them the opportunity to perform Gambian gendered masculinity for the social appearances. Successful performances of masculinity permits them to better hide their true sexual selves. Gambian men who have sex with men (MSM) live their sexualities underground in the Gambian sexcape. What they do with each other sexually is interpreted as operating outside of Gambian heteronormative socio-sexual norms. Once men are socially known to be homosexuals, they run the risk of being the victims of random homophobic violence, which can sometimes be fatal. President Jammeh and his regime had openly homophobic disposition and policies towards MSM. As it happened to the chanters, MSM were harassed and imprisoned for sexual behaviors that break the law and transgress socio-sexual norms. In scholarly literature on the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy, MSM are very marginalized when mentioned at all, usually in passing. Researchers usually explain this state of affairs by the fact that Gambian socio-cultural norms and legal constraints make it difficult to get access to MSM (see the work of Brown 1992; Ebron 2002; Nyanzi et al 2005; Nyanzi & Bah). This absence of work on MSM active in the Gambian tourism-sexual economy and the larger Gambian sexscape. This short section attempts to fill a gap in the literature on tourism-based sexual economies in Africa, in general.

I got access to MSM through a contact, Brother Malcolm<sup>13</sup>, who does HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) prevention in at-risk groups (female sex workers and MSM) identified and targeted by the Gambian state to fight the spread of

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<sup>13</sup> This is a pseudonym given in order protect his identity.

HIV/AIDS infection in the country. I had most of my conversations with Brother Malcolm in his office located in a neighborhood in Kanifing. I was very surprised to learn his prevention program operates under the Gambian Ministry of Health and targeted MSM in the country. This was quite interesting as Jammeh punishes and criminalizes MSM and same-sex sexuality, while claiming that these are only marginal behaviors. However, his government had a backdoor policy within the ministry of health to deal with realities on the ground, in which indeed in The Gambia, some men do have sex with other men. As I see it, that program was probably imposed upon them by international donors.

It was very difficult to get someone in the ministry of health to provide what is supposed to be public health data on HIV/AIDS and STIs. (I discuss this further in Chapter 5.) Thanks to the help of some of my family connections, I was able to speak to the Deputy Director of The Gambian National AIDS Secretariat (NAS). He urged me to use the acronym MSM. He also insisted that I should be careful as well because I am asking for very sensitive information.

Methodologically, I consciously made the choice to use the expression MSM in this chapter dedicated to uncover, hopefully from Gambian men's perspective, how Gambian men participate in the sexscape in general, and in the tourism-based sexual economy in particular. My intention to present a kaleidoscopic view of the Gambian sexscape absolutely requires the inclusion of this section, in this chapter. This is so because MSM also engage sexually with tourists and sometimes also with Gambian semesters. Gambian socio-sexual norms are unequivocally heteronormative, however,

same-[4]sex relations are very much an aspect of the scope of Gambian sexualities and of the Gambian sexcape.

In May of 2008, Jammeh said publicly that he was planning to behead homosexuals in The Gambia. He asserted that the country is Islamic and full of Muslim believers, and that therefore “homosexuality was a sinful and immoral practice that will not be tolerated.” Using the then president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe’s homophobic rhetoric, he further went on to say that “homosexuality was un-African and hence un-Gambian” (13 May 2013, Daily Observer). These threats came with an ultimatum leveled at nationals, tourists, refugees, and expatriates that homosexuals were given 24 hours to leave the country, otherwise he was going to unleash his security apparatus to surveil and “get rid of the bad elements” (thecriminals, thieves, drug-peddlers, and homosexuals). Jammeh went on to order hotels to expel the homosexuals they were housing, if they did not want to be forced to shutdown activities. He further threatened to introduce legislation much “stricter than the one in Iran.” Consequently, fifteen nationals and foreigners were arrested and handed corporal punishments (Freedom Newspaper May 31 2008; Daily Observer May 2008). Jammeh’s homophobic rhetoric was an integral part of his larger state run terror on the Gambian people. Jammeh’s anti-homosexual campaign sinisterly used and manipulated Gambian socio-cultural and sexual norms to ostracize citizens and non-nationals who practice non-normative sexualities in the country. In so doing, he ironically acknowledged what he did not want to acknowledge in the first place, along with many Gambians and other Africans: homosexuality is an integral part of African sexscapes.

In The Gambia, there is a general denial of the existence of Gambian homosexuality (Mah and Dibba 2008; Nyanzi et al 2005; Nyanzi 2013; Niang et al 2003). Homosexuality is presented as *haram*-sinful in Senegambian social life. Cheikh Niang et al (2003) in their study of MSM in Senegal underscore the use of religion to justify the societal rejection of MSM. They wrote:

Religious reasons are the ones most frequently invoked to justify the rejection of men who have sex with men. A Muslim dignitary explained, “Since the Muslim religion forbids homosexuality, we cannot accept homosexuals either in our homes or in our mosques.” Another cleric explained that, when a Muslim shakes hands with a homosexual, a certain number of prayers are required for his purification. Men often invoke religious reasons to affirm that their homosexual life is only for a limited period of time; they say that they expect to renounce it some day when they have grown old in order to bring themselves in line with the Muslim faith (2003:507-8).

In the Gambia much like Senegal, similar views are expressed in society. When Gambians talk about homosexuality, it is understood that they are referring exclusively to men who have sex with men (MSM), and not about women who have sex with women (this group is virtually invisible). Popular belief has it that toubabs-tourists have introduced homosexuality in the country, because homosexuality is “un-African,” it had to have been brought in by foreigners. That is how anecdotal stories of young Gambian men offering sexual services to male toubabs in the tourism industry have been circulating in Gambian society (see Brown 1992; Niang et al 2004; Nyanzi & Bah 2007).

In Gambian society, homosocial expressions of affection and bonding abound and might at first glance directly contradict the otherwise virulently homophobic positions adopted. These homosocial expressions of affection can consist of same-sex people holding hands, or sleeping in the same bed. In Sabar dance performances, men are able to cross-dress and dance in spaces that are generally appropriated by women. This local homosociality reveals a level of tolerance for transgression of gender and sexual borders.

The Wolof expression *gor-jigeeen*, which literally translates into “man-woman,” and “implies a man who is very close to the world of women” (Niang et al 2003:505), was not used by most of my interlocutors (Gambian MSM) to self-identify. They rejected it for being derogatory and because it lessens their manhood by putting them in an effeminate position. That expression is used to insult boys or men who are somewhat feminine in their performance of self. Other etic terms are currently in use in urban settings: gays, homos, and battyman. Oz, a 28 years old, told me: “I don’t like the word ‘gor jigeeen’ because it means that I am not a man. I don’t see myself as a woman, I am a man!” (Interview January 2017). Oz and other MSM who participated in the study were adamant on not being seen as less of a man. This is I think in great part tied to socio-sexual understandings of gender—when a man is seen as a woman, he is considered to be weak, not a true man. As indicated in chapter 2, socio-cultural norms, practices and spaces are divided along gender lines in Gambian society (not only in mosques). Boys and men are not expected to do domestic work nor be in the kitchen, which are respectively activities and a space associated with women. A boy or a man found in these spaces will be looked at as effeminate, and as such he becomes suspect of acting like a *gor jigeeen*, leaving him vulnerable to ridicule and perhaps violence. All this will explain

why MSM do prefer to use emic terms to call themselves: *yoos*, “Gentlemen”, or *ibbi*, “Boys”, and *coba*.

These terms open up a door on the multiple identities Gambian MSM can claim as they relate to age, socio-sexual norms, and gender roles. Yoos are described as masculine, usually the inserting partner, from an age standpoint. Ibbi are flamboyants, effeminate, and at times cross-dress; they are the receptive partners. In homosocial spaces, ibbis are usually entertainers in events and ceremonies, they performed certain tasks (serve as hostesses, publicists, and give fashion advice to women). They are courted by well-to-do Jigegs or *Diriyankee* (women of a certain class). These socially, politically and economically powerful women in return to access to the ibbis’ bodies, serve as their protectors and confidants. Coba is a recent term that young MSM use to call each other in the Senegambian region. It serves as a secret code word to identify each other. Unfortunately, a young Senegalese Mbalax musician, Wally Ballago Secka, who has been accused of being a goor-jigeen, recently revealed the code. In an effort to convince the public that he is not a goor-jigeen, Wally Ballago Secka had a line in a song that said that he was not a Coba. So the meaning of coba was revealed, and as such it lost its value to serve as a cover. It is important to note that these different labels have as much to do with gender, social identities, and status as with sexual practices (Niang et al 2003). The sexual roles suggested by this always-changing lexicon are not rigidly imposed: an ibbi can be in the position of being the penetrative partner, while a Yoos can be in the position of being receptive. As Ablie a 23 years self-identified MSM told me:

For me I can be on top or at the bottom, it all depends on how I feel about the person. I guess you can say that I am flexible (Group discussion January 2017).

Ablie's comments confirm that these categories are not fixed, and that sexual roles are contingent upon the nature of the specific relationship one is involved in. Being an MSM comes with a lot of secrecy in the Gambian context. MSM must rely on non-verbal communication to identify each other discretely. They recognize each other through the gaze—as some told me, an eye contact gives you a good indication—handshakes, small gestures, clothing (the way in which one wears his *boubou* (traditional clothing), etc. All of my interlocutors emphasized the importance of secrecy and subtlety about their sexual lives.

All of my same-sex behaving interlocutors shared stories about their first sexual experiences and subsequent relationships with a man occurred when they were teenagers. That first sexual experience was either with someone from their own age group, or with an older man. Don, who was 45 (the oldest one in one of the group discussions I held), had been married. He was the father of two teenage boys, and was originally from Sierra Leone. His first contact with a man was when he was 15, in Sierra Leone:

I had a friend in my neighborhood who invited me to go to a concert. He was about two years my senior. After the concert, he told me to go with him to a bar to drink some beer. I told him no because my mother would kill me. However, he convinced me to go with him. I drank a soft drink and he had a beer. After the bar he asked me to hangout in his room. I followed him. So while we were talking in his room, he began touching me and we eventually kissed. I was nervous. I decided to go home. However, the next day I could not stop thinking about him and the way I felt. So I went back to him (Group discussion January 2017).

Mustapha, a 24 year old , shared the following story with me:

While I was in high school, I was very close to one of my classmates, named Idirissa[5]. He was tall and handsome. We would hangout in each other's house. Everyone knew that he was my friend. However, our friendship grew and we began touching each other, kissing, and watching pornographic films together while masturbating. Sometimes we would do it to each other. But one day we decided to penetrate each other. After this, we began a relationship, we loved each other (Group discussion January 2017).

Some Gambian MSM meet other guys through social media. Yusuf, a 22 years old MSM, met a man through Facebook while he was in tenth grade:

One day I got a friend request on Facebook from a Gambian. I accepted it. He began messaging me. After a month communicating via Facebook, we decided to meet face-to-face. We met and began visiting each other's compound. Eventually my friend declared that he loved me and he began kissing me. I pushed him away and left. The next day, I decided to visit him to apologize. As I apologized, we embraced and he pushed me in the bed. And then it happened, he penetrated me, which was funny because I was dating three girls at the time (Group discussion January 2017).

One of the MSM participants in one of my group discussions said that he met contacts from participating in online websites such as Grindr and Hornet. The guys who are familiar with these dating websites tend to meet foreigners and/or Gambians living abroad (semesters). This means that a contact can be established prior to a visit to The Gambia, when they are able to hook up. Sura, a 26 years old , said proudly during our group discussion that he had met a male semester who is married to an English woman

and lives in London. His semester male friend is about to visit him and they intend to spend the three weeks of his vacation together. His semester lover sends him money and other gifts to sustain and solidify their relationship. Though the initial first contacts for many are quite pleasant because they came with some affection and physical attraction, some can be quite violent and traumatic.

Ebou, a 23 year old a self-identified yoons, was raped by an older male neighbor. He explained that he had never been with and interacted sexually with men prior to him being raped:

Well for me the first time, I was raped by a man in my neighborhood. One day when I was coming from school, he called me to his room. So I went. As soon as I entered the room, he pushed me down on his bed, took my pants off, and penetrated me at once. I was so shocked, so I didn't scream. I left immediately afterwards and went home. I was sick for a day but I didn't tell my parents because I was afraid of everything. After that, I never saw the man again in my neighborhood (Group discussion January 2017).

I admired Ebou's ability to speak about his traumatic experience with such ease and resilience. However, I was also horrified at the thought of his mental and physical state at the time of the incident, when he was a little boy who couldn't tell his parents or anyone. When I probed him to talk about his emotional and physical state at the time, he said that he was sick for a week and had bleeding in his rectum, which he cleaned with warm water and salt, which stung him. He further said that he simply lay in bed and cried. This brought the group to embrace him and ask why he had never told them about this rape. Ebou's story prompted Ousman to say that some times older men will try to take

advantage of effeminate boys. That is why you have to be strong, and manly, so that they won't try you. Ebou acquiesced and explained that he thought that the reason the man targeted him was because of his effeminate way of being. From the beginning of our interaction during the group discussion, the other guys treated Ebou as a gor-jigeen. They said that he had a big butt and that he sat like a jigege. In fact during our conversation about sexual positions, they all said jokingly that Ebou was definitely a bottom, an ibbi, that he likes strong men. Ebou agreed with defiance! Sucking his teeth he said: "At least I know what I like!" Ebou and all of the guys knew the importance of keeping their sexual preferences and activities a secret. Secrecy is very important, no matter how hard things are.

My same-sex behaving interlocutors spoke of the Wolof term for *soutoura*, meaning in English discretion. The concept of *soutoura* is important for it provides social and structural protection from being harmed or persecuted. As Mustapha said in trying to let me know the importance of *soutoura* in their lives as same-sex behaving menMSM:

For guys like us, you have to make sure that you made the right judgment on who is who. If not, you could be in a lot of trouble. That is why we as a group have names for each other, and we tend to hangout together as a group, so that our secrets are not out in the open (Group discussion January 2017).

All agreed that exercising good judgment and reading the gaze of men correctly is constantly in the back of their minds. This is why they employ terminologies to identify each other. Some approached men using stereotypic performances associated with female behaviors and clothing (loud colors, an unusual design in your boubou, or skinny pants and morse). Others focus on picking up nonverbal cues in men's gazes, their hand

gestures and body movements, that let men know that they belong to the same world. These nonverbal communications and gazes allow MSM to identify each other. The ultimate way to hide your sexual preference is by having a wife or a girlfriend publicly.

Almost all except one of my interlocutors said that they have a wife and/or several girlfriends they are intimate with as a way to cover over their sexual selves. Don, the oldest in the group, said that he is married and has two teenage sons. Others said that they have regular girlfriends, and sometimes more than one. Mustapha, who lives by himself, does not have a girlfriend. He said: “I am the girlfriend, I live alone, so I don’t have to worry about my parents being in my business.” As an unmarried man in The Gambia, Mustapha enjoys a lot of autonomy. Unlike his female counterpart, he can choose to live by himself without any scrutiny or surveillance, for his male gender gives him that autonomy. For the rest, especially those who still live in the compound of their families, they must maintain a girlfriend or get married to perform the hegemonic Gambian masculinity. They are pushed to engage in heteronormative relationships with women. Failure to do so could lead to the suspicion to be an MSM, which could trigger ostracism, stigmatization, humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, and even imprisonment. A simple “mistake” could lead to death and loss of freedom. Many of them claimed that their families do not know about their sexual preferences or identity. Don is the only one who said that he revealed his sexual identity and preference to his family and wife. This resulted in his wife leaving him and going back to Sierra Leone. She left him with one of their sons; his mother and sisters deserted him. Don said that he and his sisters used to be so close, where they served as emotional and financial support always. However, once he revealed himself to them, they did not want to have anything to do with him. He said

he can not even go back to Freetown, for fear for his safety because everyone in his neighborhood knows now that he is an MSM. It appears that most MSM are on the “downlow,” and have girlfriends or wives to conceal their sexual activities and preference.

Just like many young Gambians must find creative means to make a living and improve their life chances, MSM must be ingenious to secure an income on which they can live or survive. They engage in the sexual economy with locals or tourists. When they are engaged with locals, the giving partner tends to be older, although they relate to different age groups for affective, sexual, and material exchanges.

For the MSM who participate in the tourism-based sexual economy, there are no designated spot that they could go to meet tourists interested in same-sex encounters. So they often come in contact with tourists via their female sex worker friends, social media, and by chance. My interlocutors lived in the urban Kombo area, where they found opportunities to engage in sexual liaisons with casual partners among locals and tourists. They sometimes travel to Senegal to interact with Senegalese MSM. Niang et al (2004) observed that MSM are present in the beaches of The Gambia to engage in sex work. Western tourists are known to seek out young partners considered “virgins” and therefore uninfected with HIV (Niang et al 2004). Ablie and two other MSM said that they like to go to Senegal because they can enjoy some level of freedom. Currently, Ablie has a lover in Dakar. In fact, he said that he was getting ready to run to Dakar and be with this lover, until the end of the political impasse with the loss of the election by Jammeh. He said that he was in love with him and that he hopes to get married to him one day.

Adam, a 23 year-old MSM, has had several casual sexual encounters with male tourists, though he said that he doesn't charge, he explained that he expects them to give him good gifts for the risk that he is taking to be with them. He explained:

With the toubabs I don't have a relationship with them because they are just here for a short time and we can't be together like that, so when I get the opportunity, I take it because I know that I will get some things from them, they have money (Interviewed January 2017).

Adam, like most young men in The Gambia who has sexual liaisons with male tourists, does not see his activities as engaging in sex work. Rather, he takes a stereotypic gender view that women are the ones engaging in sex work. Adam explains that the nature of MSM activities requires their encounters to be casual because if they are not, you will be suspected of engaging in sex with a male toubab, which is very dangerous. Ablie said that he once had an encounter with a toubab who he met in Westfield while hanging with his friends. He said that they kept looking at each other while standing in the traffic. He recognized the gaze. He told the friends he was with that he needed to run to the bank. So when they all entered the bank, he quickly went outside and spoke to the toubab telling him: "look I know what you want, I am with my friends so just give me your number and I will call you later." This brought him to contact that Swedish guy, who he subsequently visited in his hotel room. The guy gave Ablie 360 pounds. Ablie claimed that he penetrated the toubab, not the other way around. Some of the MSM who engaged with male toubabs are quick to highlight the fact that in these encounters, they take the position of the inserter (yoos). This is in great part attributed to racial stereotypes by both partners, for the MSM toubabs often want, according to Adam, "a big black man to fuck

them, that is why they come here, for us to take them with our big *chewchew* (colloquial term for penis) and for the local MSM, as Mustapha said “the idea of being taken by a white man is not possible because that would mean that they are lessen as a man, because white men are not considered to be strong men” (Interview January 2017). Both local MSM and global north MSM tourists are engaged in the racializing of each other’s imagined sexuality. MSM global north tourists imagine Gambians as well-endowed and manly, and eventually highly hypersexual (Niang et al 2004). During the group conversation, many local MSM measured their sexuality as more masculine than those of white men because they penetrated them, reproducing in that way the patriarchal order and the preeminence of the penetrator in sexual encounters. However, Ablie said that he had a toubab friend who was very nice with him, that he once only danced for him, performing a striptease. Don said that he was once in a relationship with an older Belgian man who showered him with gifts and spoiled him. Most of the time, the only thing that toubab wanted from him was a hand job and a chance to cuddle. He said the relationship ended when he left and went back to Belgium. Yusuf said that he doesn’t like being with a toubab because they get you in trouble. He said that once he was introduced to a toubab by a female friend, who was with the friend of the toubab. He decided to meet with them at the hotel. Once he arrived they went in a separate room, he with his toubab and his female friend with her own toubab. However, as he was sitting on the couch while his toubab went to take a shower, a knock on the door announced the police. They came in with the Hotel security, which had called them to report a suspected MSM activity. Yusuf in recounting the story said:

The stupid toubab came out of the bathroom naked. I nearly died. He didn't even bother to put his clothes on before coming out to see the commotion. So the police questioned me and asked what I was doing with toubab in the room? I told them that we were friends and that I was his guide and that we had just arrived from the tour. Luckily, one of the police officer was an old acquaintance, he was a sergeant, he spoke to his men and negotiated some bribe money from the toubab, which allowed them to let us go, at that moment my friend told me to take the back road and run (Group discussion January 2017).

Yusuf said that this experience left him with great fear and as a deterrent to stay away from MSM activities with toubabs. When Jammeh declared all homosexuals *persona non grata*, and ordered hotels to throw out homosexuals or face a shut down, he gave license to hotels owners to act on his behalf and reporting those found to be homosexuals. This presented a problem for many hotels owners, because they and their staffs had to determine and identify who was a homosexual and who wasn't. This brought citizens to report to the police those who are seen as engaging in suspicious activities with male toubabs. Some hotels banned Gambian men from entering with male tourists, or did not allow Gambian men to enter the rooms of male tourists. This intense surveillance and policing further pushed MSM into hiding. MSM Global North tourists find a haven in small motels and guest-houses outside the TDA for their meetings. MSM tourists staying in hotels and being seen walking with local Gambian men on hotel ground run the risk of being arrested and charged with homosexuality.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter began with a brief discussion of how the plan to develop tourism in The Gambia after independence from Britain was adopted and implemented as an opportunity to diversify the economy, which was exclusively based on agriculture until then, and to obtain badly needed foreign currencies.

The chapter then explored the profound transformations of Gambian society the development of the tourism industry provoked, interrupting here and there, particularly in what became the TDA, communities whose way of life was centered on subsistence agriculture. The process increased the flux or migration from rural to urban areas in search of jobs. Very few ended up working in the tourism industry regular jobs, and most were left to work in the tourism industry's informal sector and endure the unstable nature of the income they can get from it for their labor. Poverty or near-poverty is the load of most young rural migrants when they get to the TDA. This poverty and lack of opportunities in The Gambia make them the perfect candidates for providing sex work to service Global North tourists who have dollars and Euros.

The situation of limited income and poverty that many male Gambian youths are subjected to makes them unable to fulfill the socio-cultural expectations of respectable men in the position of husband and primary provider for his household. These expectations are formulated in various ways in Gambian society. This inability to be providers makes many male Gambian youths delay marriage and dream about nothing more than emigrating to become a semester, so that they can finally reach masculine social respectability at home by becoming a kilifa who can indeed provide for the family.

The case must be made that all Gambian men—those involved in the tourism-based sexual economy and those who are not—are animated by this objective to become a kilifa one day, hopefully soon. Inability to become one provokes depression and feelings of failure and social inadequacy. Even the MSM interviewed want to be true men, in the Gambian sense and refuse to have their homosexuality become a mark of them not being real men.

The theoretical perspective of this project is infusing this chapter. Here as well, I wanted to listen to the voices of the Gambians who participate in the tourism-based sexual economy. The only way to do so was to replace the scripts that characterize Gambian men's participation in the tourism industry, within the larger Gambian sexscape. That contextualizing strategy assures a serious consideration of Gambian voices and perspectives and allows for a better deciphering of the inter-racial sexual-affective encounters between Gambian men and Global North female tourists, and also sometimes between Gambian men (MSM) and Global North male tourists.

The chanters transgress socio-sexual norms of masculinity when they get involved with white female tourists to whom they are not married. Metaphorically, Global North tourists symbolize wealth, the respectability of age, the white race, and—above anything else—a connection to the Global North, this magical place with lots of opportunities. This involvement with toubabs gives chanters a new kind of somewhat enhanced subjectivity, which can be the source of envy by other young men, particularly if the relationship is successful and brings obvious benefits, and perhaps even successful legal migration to the Global North. This state of affairs goes against Paula Ebron's (2002)

claim, according to which such relationships between chanters and female toubabs threaten the chanters' masculinity because they end up being "feminized" for not strictly falling within Gambian traditional understanding of masculinity (Ebron 2002:171). A transnational feminist critique of Ebron—an African American feminist anthropologist—could consider her refusal to appreciate how much Global North female tourists are able to capitalize on their race-, age-, gender-, geographically-based privileges as Global Northerners in a global economy that favors their kind is quite surprising. Her sympathy is reserved for fellow female Global North tourists for daring to assume their "liberated" sexuality the same way Global North men of their generations have been assuming theirs as they travel abroad, in the Global South and enjoy sexual encounters with young black and brown women while on vacation. Additionally, Paula Ebron's claim does not take into consideration Gambian men's efforts to engage in the tourism-based sexual economy as sex workers to hopefully travel abroad, and finally be able to fulfill their masculine roles by taking care of their families, sending remittances, investing in the purchase of a home in The Gambia, open a business, educate their children, etc. Obviously, Ebron did not attempt to do what this dissertation has been doing throughout: locate the tourism-based sexual economy within the larger Gambian sexscape so that Gambian voices and perspectives can be listened to, carefully.

## CHAPTER V

### The Gambian Sexscape and HIV/AIDS: A Socio-Ecological Perspective to Sexual Health in The Tourism-Based Sexual Economy

This chapter emerges out of an excellent advice I received from my dissertation chair, Dr. Mark Padilla, who is a leader in HIV/AIDS research and prevention in tourism-based sexual economies. In his work, he has used the medical anthropological notion of “syndemics” to refer to the larger political, economic, and cultural context within which commercial sex workers serve a tourist *clientèle* in the Dominican Republic. Padilla’s careful attention to larger contexts has been inspiring for the design of my own research methodology in this dissertation, which wants to understand the interactions between Gambians and other West Africans and Global North tourists in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy within the larger political, economic and socio-cultural contexts that make up Gambian society. I refer to the latter with the concept of Gambian sexscape, which provides stages for the performances of “socio-sexual scripts.”

Padilla’s scholarship and prevention projects advocate for the use of broader systemic approaches. He examines how tourism areas can serve as sites for the development of ecological systems that shape sexual vulnerability. For Padilla, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STI) prevention programs should aim to avoid the presumptions that “risk groups” are somehow isolable from the rest of the population: a common assumption that simplifies social, environmental, and economic realities with respect to sexual risk and vulnerabilities in and around the tourism industry (Padilla et al 2010:3).

At first, as an African, I was very much apprehensive to focus my research on HIV/AIDS. I thought that by doing so, I would only be taking for granted, as a premise, the stereotypical representation of continental Africa as the dark continent, filled with savage beasts and unknown fatal diseases (Keim and Somerville 2017). I absolutely did not want to be a part of the reproduction of the racialized geographic imagination of the “diseased continent and its people.” Indeed, since the start of the global panic around HIV/AIDS, Africa has been depicted and represented as a calamity, which speaks more about Global North views of African sexualities. A great example of this kind of essentializing research is most certainly the oft-cited study by demographers John Caldwell, Pat Caldwell and Pat Quiggins (1989). Their research intended to analyze the social contexts of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa. They ended up developing racist theories and essentialized notions of African sexuality, which they described as inherently permissive and filled with immoral sexual behaviors that could do nothing but accelerate the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. That publication triggered a flurry of additional research and popular media productions highlighting frightening statistics of African infection rates. All of this came with a neo-colonial logic that posits Africa and African sexuality as savage, oversexed, and uncontrollably promiscuous. Hansjörg Dilger (2008) observed the following:

Apart from rampant fantasies about prostitution and the red-light districts stretching from Nairobi to Johannesburg and Dakar, the European/North American discourse on sexuality and AIDS in Africa has been fed by images of an enforced, exotic, and often violent sexuality said to prevail on the continent: polygyny, female genital mutilation, and especially the (gang) rapes of women

and babies in South Africa have made sexual violence and child rape the main issues for international media reports on AIDS in Africa (Dilger 2008:125).

Behind these depictions are Global North desires to “save” Africa and its diseased starving people. These ideas erupted along with a flurry of prevention programs from Global North donors who paraded an “altruism” dedicated to “help” Africans (Patton 1997:387). This situation gave Global North researchers the license to land on the continent with the goal to curb HIV/AIDS spread. In the process, they engendered a re-medicalization of African sexualities and adopted approaches that called for the elimination of cultural and sexual practices doomed to be the driving force behind the rapid spread of the disease (Tamale 2011). Such research-driven and media images created a discursive materialism that reproduced old paradigms and ignored historical inequalities and relations of power.

The re-medicalization of African sexualities and the call for the elimination of cultural and sexual practices thought to contribute to the spread of the illness led to the making of an epidemiology that worked to create fear and to stigmatize HIV/AIDS patients. Such approaches served to do nothing but to dehumanize Africans and to distort complex national and local realities. Transnational feminist theory has produced conceptual tools to explore relations of power and to tackle with macro level political issues of inequalities, poverty, employment, and gendered constructions of sexuality (Mama 1997; Kumar et al 2001; Ratele 2001).

As Kopano Ratele (2001) poignantly said, sexualities are always political because they are always performed at the intersection of power, gender, and race. It is considering that intersection that this chapter attempts to assess the impact of the tourism-based

sexual economy on the general social health of The Gambia. The chapter also considers specific HIV/AIDS prevention programs in existence and the specific populations targeted: mainly female sex workers and MSM. Undoubtedly, the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy constitutes an ecological site fostering high-risk sexual behaviors.

The Gambia was under the authoritarian regime of Yahya Jammeh for 22 years. As is well known, the megalomaniac Jammeh (who did not have more than a high school degree) whimsically claimed to be able to cure AIDS (Daily Observer 2007; CNN 2007; [www.Statehouse.gm](http://www.Statehouse.gm)), which had a grave negative impact on ongoing prevention and protection campaigns, and on already infected individuals. This situation made the Gambian case very unique.

During my various periods of research in The Gambia, obtaining data about HIV/AIDS was very difficult. After months of trying to get information and data on my own without success, I reached out to my well-connected female cousin, Madame Ceesay who introduced me to the then Director of the National AIDS Secretariat or NAS in The Gambia. That person referred me to his Deputy, whom I met in his office in Kanifing, a suburb of Banjul. When talking with the Deputy Director about my project, he immediately stopped me to encourage me to use the expression “MSM” as opposed to “gays” because there are men who will always reject the label “gay” even though they have sex with men. Once he understood the focus of my research, the Deputy told me that he couldn’t share his data with me directly. He explained that I would have to supply him with a detailed questionnaire. It is only upon the necessary approval of his Director that he would be able to respond to my questions. At this point, after I told him that I just needed access to individuals from the targeted populations to interview and to the NAS

department that specifically dealt with female sex workers. This is how I got the name and contact information of the Director of the Network of AIDS Service. His name was Brother Malcolm. He came to be very helpful: he gave me access to key population (sex workers and MSM) and to the National HIV/AIDS data.

### **HIV/AIDS in The Gambia**

In May of 1986 the first case of HIV was diagnosed (National AIDS Secretariat, April 15 2015). The following year, the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) was created within the then Ministry of Health. Decades after the creation of the NACP, in the 2000s, both the National AIDS Council (NAC) and the National AIDS Secretariat were founded.

The first national HIV/AIDS policies and guidelines were enacted in 1995. At the time, the country had two goals: to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS and to reduce the social and personal consequences of HIV infection both to the person already infected and to those who had developed AIDS. There were various policy components: prevention of transmission through sexual intercourse and through blood transfusion or blood contamination (drug users); provision of care and social support for infected persons; creation of a planning and management program for monitoring and evaluation; and HIV/AIDS/STI epidemiological surveillance.

In 2000, the country received funding from the World Bank to implement an HIV/AIDS Rapid Response Project (HARRP). The HARRP allowed the establishment of a National AIDS Council under the Office of the President, with a Secretariat responsible for co-ordinating the national response: the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS). HARRP's objectives were to help the country to stem the growth of the epidemic by: 1) maintaining the low level of the HIV/AIDS epidemic; 2) reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigate

its effect; 3) increase the access to preventive service, and to care and support services for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS (NAS 2015 Report). This prompted the development of the 2003-2008 National Strategic Framework to respond to the epidemic. This framework coordinated and governed all prevention initiatives from public, private and NGO sectors. Additional funding to fight HIV/AIDS in The Gambia came from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), which complemented the HARRP project on prevention

With more funding coming in with their respective requirements from Global North funders, the National Strategic Framework of 2003-2008 was replaced by a new National Strategic Plan (NSP) for the period of 2015-2019. It was implemented in 2014. It brought about the implementation of a behavioral surveillance survey on HIV, which focused on identifying most-at-risk groups. In general, The Gambia's HIV treatment is clinic-based.

The national strategic framework to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in The Gambia was developed in 12 sites (Banjul, Serre Kunda, Faji Kunda, Brikama, Gunjur, Sibanor, Soma, Essau, Farafenni, Kuntaur, Bansang, and Basse). In these sites, clinics or mobile clinics provided testing, counseling and anti-retroviral medications to the community (see Cassidy 2012). Since AIDS is a notifiable disease, all doctors operating in The Gambia and who made a diagnosis of HIV/AIDS infection were encouraged to report the case to the Director of Health Services (National Policy Guidelines on HIV and AIDS 2014-2020). Additionally, the Gambian Criminal Code identifies a range of offences that can be used to prosecute offenders for willful transmission of HIV/AIDS.

I have consulted statistical data from published and unpublished reports from the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) of 2008 and 2015 and from the UNAIDS Gambia Country report. The total number of people (both adults and children) living with the HIV virus in The Gambia was reported to be between 17,000 and 24,000. This number could be broken down into several categories with respect to age and gender as follows:

-Men and women ages 15 and over: between 16,000 and 22,000

-Women ages 15 and over: between 9,300 and 13,000

-Men ages 15 and over: between 6,400 and 9,200

-Children ages 0-14: between 1,300 and 2,000) (NAS April 2015 Report and UNAIDS Gambia Country Report 2016).

The HIV prevalence rates have been reported to be as follows:

-Adults aged 15 – 49: between 1.4 – 2.0.

-Women aged 15 – 49: between 1.6 – 2.3).

Men aged 15 – 49: between 1.2 – 1.7) (NAS April 2015 Report and UNAIDS Gambia Country Report 2016).

Every year, new infections are estimated to be between 1000 and 1,700, and yearly deaths related to AIDS are estimated to be between 1000 and 1,400. Only 30% (between 22% and 37%) of the deaths reported had accessed anti-retroviral therapy due to lack of availability and funding for these medicines.. Among pregnant women to be HIV positive, 69% (between 59% and 83%) were accessing treatment and/or prophylaxis in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission in 2016. The same year, between 200 and 500 children were infected due to mother-to-child transmission (NAS April 2015 Report and UNAIDS Gambia Country Report 2016).

In general since 2010, new infections are decreasing by 3% per year. And deaths related to AIDS have decreased by about 23% (NAS April 2015 Report and UNAIDS Gambia Country Report 2016). These figures suggest a low prevalence in the general population. However, when taking gender into consideration, one cannot but acknowledge that women are disproportionately affected by the virus and are more at-risk than their male counterparts. There is a higher prevalence rate among urban men (2.4%) than among rural men (1.8%) (NAS April 2015 Report). As for the women, it is the contrary: urban women had a rate of HIV prevalence of 1.3% in comparison to 2.3% for rural women (NAS April 2015 Report). Most of the chanters in this study were rural migrants who kept wives and families back in their rural homes. However, they are not particularly targeted for prevention as female sex workers and MSM are targeted by State. This is in great part tied to a gendered understanding of who is naturally seen as a “sex worker” and whose sexuality is deemed non-normative and hence risky. Although chanters participations as sex worker with tourists do not alone provide evidence of higher risk for HIV/AIDS and STIs transmission, however, studies from the Caribbean on tourism have revealed that migration of rural men to the tourism areas increases risks for HIV/AIDS and STIs (Padilla 2009; Padilla et al 2010). Therefore, a more comprehensive effort is needed to bring male sex workers into the HIV/AIDS and STIs prevention program for the socio-ecological health of the country.

With respect to employment, HIV prevalence was higher among employed people (both men and women) than among unemployed (NAS April 2015 Report). Most people who are employed, especially in the tourism industry, have low wages. These force them to engage in strategic survival activities, one of which is engaging in the tourism-based

affective-sexual economy to supplement their meager incomes. Gambians with higher education had the lowest HIV prevalence, as opposed to those with no formal education (NAS April 2015 Report).

In 2011, NAS implemented a bio-behavioral surveillance (IBBS) on two key populations, female sex workers (FSWs) and other key populations. HIV prevalence among FSWs was 15.9% in 2011, an alarming number nearly surpassing the rate of pregnant women and other women in general. What is quite interesting and noteworthy is that in the NAS report of April 15, 2015, female sex workers were the only “key” or “at-risk” population mentioned by name. This omission of the mention of other at-risk populations must be related to the Government’s official denial of the existence of Gambian MSM. However, the report went on to say:

Other key populations have a high HIV prevalence, 9.8%; high levels of self-reported unprotected anal intercourse, low rates of use of water-based lubricants, low levels of knowledge of high-risk sexual behaviours, and high levels on human rights violations (NAS Report April 2015:5).

Timothy Mah and Yusupha Dibba (2008) highlighted several at-risk populations, who were identified as: commercial sex workers, commercial vehicle drivers, uniformed personnel, men who have sex with men (MSM), fisherfolk (Mah and Dibba 2008:2-5). They provided a general overview of the most-at-risk populations (MARPs).

Commercial sex workers (male and female) operate mostly in major urban areas, tourist areas and transit centers in the country. Pickering et al.’s (1992) qualitative study found that this group and their clients are highly mobile: their paths are working locations in both The Gambia and Senegal. Condoms were used 80% of the times with contacts

Pickering et al (1992): this data comes without explanations about the research measurement instruments used to check consistent and correct condom use (Mah and Dibba 2008).

Commercial vehicle drivers have been a feature of vulnerable populations in the spread of the pandemic in Africa (see the work of Bwayo et al 1994; Rakwar et al 1999; Mah and Dibba 2008). As professional truckers, they spend a high proportion of their time away from homes and families, which can result in higher sexual encounters with non-regular partners or sex workers (Bwayo et al 1994).

Uniformed personnel such as the military, police force and other uniformed service men and women such as customs and immigration officers are at an increased risk of HIV/STIs transmission for they are posted in multiple sites in and around the country, away from spouses and stable partners. Their postings in various sites of the country allows them to escape socio-sexual norms and constraints. This puts them in contact with the higher risks segments of the population in the site they have been posted in (Mah and Dibba 2008).

MSM are disproportionately affected by HIV/STIs They have a high HIV prevalence of 9.8% (Mason et al 2013). The usual Senegambian socio-sexual norms that make homosexuality—particularly male-to-male—illegal, taboo and stigmatized in many African countries, especially in The Gambia (UNAIDS 1998; Niang et al 2002), push such encounters into secrecy, further away from societal view. The latter makes it difficult for public health prevention campaigns to reach MSM. They then might risk overlooking their existence (see, for example, Johnson 2007; Niang et al 2002). As a result, there are only limited data available on HIV prevalence and associated infections

among MSM in West Africa. Studies in Senegal and Ghana highlight that HIV seroprevalence is considerably higher among MSM than in the general population (IGLHRC 2007; Mason et al 2013; Smith et al 2009; Wade, Kane, Diallo et al 2005).

Fisherfolk, in this case, are men. Just like commercial truckers, they are found to also have a high HIV prevalence rate in Sub-Saharan Africa (Gordon 2005; Kissling et al 2005). Most fishermen in The Gambia are foreigners from Senegal and Ghana. They are believed to be married in their home countries (Mah and Dibba 2008). Fishermen's mobility allows them to have multiple sexual partners with whom they have unprotected sex, increasing their risk of infections (Mah and Dibba 2008).

The focus of this dissertation brings me to specifically focus on two groups within the “most-at-risk population”: sex workers and MSM. In The Gambia, the very nature of sex work is highly gendered. For many Gambians, the mention of “sex workers” automatically brings about what is seen as the prototypical sex worker *par excellence*: the female sex worker. In such a highly patriarchal society as is The Gambia, male sex and sex work do not go together that easily. Such a state of affairs unfortunately brings prevention programs to miss an important most-at-risk population: Gambian MSM and chanters (see chapter 4).

Most of the female sex workers I interacted with for this study are single, or divorced women with children and families to take care of. Because of the nature of Gambian socio-sexual norms, divorced women often face social isolation from both their former marital family and their own family. Most female sex workers I interviewed had a lack of familial economic and other social support coupled with low education skills in their background prior to engaging in sex work. Above and beyond themselves, they had

to support their children and families. The income earned from their labor allowed them to take care of their children's basic needs (food, housing, and school fees) and contribute to their parents' well-being.

Male sex workers were generally single, although some were married with children to take care of as well. However, what all of the male sex workers had in common was that they needed to fulfill a notion of "Gambian masculinity" as breadwinners for themselves and for a group of relatives (children, and/or parents, etc.). They too had similar responsibilities as their female counterparts, in that their earnings from sex work allowed them to take care of familial responsibilities.

### **Socio-Sexual Actors, HIV/STIs Knowledge, and Condom Use in the Gambian Sexcape**

The socio-sexual actors I have in mind here are those described in the socio-sexual scripts discussed throughout the dissertation, but mostly in chapters 3 and 4. In general, almost all of my interlocutors or research participants were universally aware of HIV/AIDS. The extent of that knowledge about transmission and prevention varied. Very often, most of my interviewees did not include the other STIs in their individual prevention strategies.

As explained in chapters 3 and 4, the socio-sexual scripts highlighted in this dissertation as giving existence to what I have called "the (patriarchal) Gambian sexcape," are nothing but affective/sexual ambivalent bonds that make it difficult for socio-sexual actors to assess and engage in risk reduction strategies in their friendships/relationships. Not using or requesting the use of a condom might work as a cement in the "relationship/friendship" in that this expresses both a confidence in the

other partner and a confirmation of “sexual exclusivity.” As described previously, in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy, Gambian sex workers and Global North tourists alike are involved in a web of affective-sexual exchanges that make it difficult to negotiate condom use, which in turn contributes to higher rates of sexually risky behaviors. This also makes it difficult for HIV/STIs prevention programs to be successful with these specific socio-sexual actors, because their “friendships” with Global North tourists operate according to the Gambian socio-sexual logic of friendships/relationships. This is why prevention programs in the country are generally geared exclusively towards commercial female sex workers (in brothels and street-based) because they are the most visible. MSM are left out of this visibility because they operate outside of acceptable Gambian socio-sexual norms and behaviors. During fieldwork, I found that female sex workers, especially those I interviewed in the brothels, were the most knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS prevention simply because of their prior exposure to sensitization programs on HIV transmission and prevention. However, knowledge did not necessarily equate to safer sexual practices and/or to the ability to better negotiate condom use with “friends/clients.”

In the behavioral surveillance survey of 2010, 15.6% of FSWs reported using a condom at the last sexual intercourse with a nonpaying partner, in comparison to 96.7% reporting using condom at the last sexual encounter with a client (Jallow 2011). This is significant because the ways in which sex work operate in the tourism-based sexual economy, most sexual encounters between locals and tourists are not seen as commercial sex work. They are absolutely not constructed as such, on the contrary. This then calls for reflections on how “sex work” is actually defined, in that prevention programs need

not use the word “client,” when dealing with FSWs or MSWs performing sexual labor in the tourism industry. Many of my interlocutors had misconceptions about HIV transmission and visibility of the infection in a person. For instance, several of them said that you could acquire the infection by sharing utensils, and or touching someone who is infected. Others said that you can tell a person is infected by the way they look, as Binns, a 25-year-old FSW who engage in the affective-sexual economy with Global North tourists said:

I use a condom when they request it. But when I see that they are nice and clean, with no marks in their body, if their bodies are nice and clean, then I know that they take care of themselves and that they are not sick and I don't mind not being protected (Interview December 2016).

Binns' statement was echoed by many of my interlocutors, both males and females. They somehow are convinced that if someone looks “nice and clean” they are free from the virus. Another misconception that goes around is about how much skinny a tourist is: people who are “too slim may be carrying the virus as well.” In general being skinny in many African contexts is usually associated with lack of nutrition and sickness, which usually comes with being poor. So, it is not surprising that skinniness was associated with illness and the virus. Chanters as MSW, though they held shared knowledge with the FSWs, often cited abstinence and monogamy as other components of HIV prevention measures. Most of the socio-sexual actors cited transmission through needles, razor blades, and circumcision tools. This is related to what Mah and Dibba (2008) cited as reflective of early HIV education campaigns and socio-sexual norms that proscribe talking about sex openly in the country (Mah and Dibba 2008:14).

In general, married couples in The Gambia do not demand condom use from their spouse. This is so even if one is engaged in a polygynous marriage, where the man can have up to four wives: he is not expected nor asked to wear a condom during intercourses. For the married couples I spoke to, if one of the spouses were using a condom during intercourse, suspicion would arise that the spouse (usually the man) had engaged in an affair or otherwise morally unsuitable relationship or interaction. For fear of not wanting to reveal that they are having an affair, many wives and husbands commonly avoid the use of condoms.

Mariam, a 28-year-old married woman told me:

Why do I need to use a condom when I am married. We are in love. He is my husband. We don't need condoms in our marital bed. If I ask my husband to use a condom, he will be vexed with me, and rightfully so. I am his wife not his girlfriend (Interview December 2017).

In marriages, women are often put at higher risk, for they lack the sexual agency needed to demand from their husbands the use of a condom. In polygynous marriages, wives' status is tied to their ability to have children and to sexually satisfy their husband's sexual "needs." Both African and Caribbean scholars have highlighted how notions of mutual trust in relationships premised on romantic love serve to increase women's vulnerability (Rebhun 1999; Hirsch 2003; Parikh 2004).

In the Africanist literature, the sugar-babies/daddies script is depicted in association with age and financial asymmetries, where the young female partner is assumed to have limited power to negotiate safer sexual behaviors. This explains why many organizations devote programmatic resources to campaigns warning young women

to be aware of sugar daddies (Luke 2005; Gambia Family Planning Association Poster (GFPA), Beware of sugar daddy, poster, Banjul, Gambia: GFPA, 1994). Sugar-babies-sugar-daddies relationships are constructed as major health concerns in prevention programs in continental Africa. As discussed in chapter 3, the socioeconomic realities of many African contexts, and The Gambia is no exception, privilege older men over younger men for access to young women, because older men have more social and economic capital, which translates into greater opportunities to shop down the generational ladder for a partner. The fact that women between the ages of 15 and over are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS in The Gambia is alarming, even though no data so far suggest that this is tied to sugar babies-sugar daddies relationships. From the limited data I gathered and from my analytical take on my conversations with sugar-babies and sugar-daddies, it appeared that the more the “couples” stayed together and the more “stable” their relationship, the less likely they were to engage in safe sex practices. For all of my sugar-babbies/sugar-daddies interlocutors it was clear that at the beginning of their relationships, condoms were used at all times. However, as time went on and the relationship/friendship solidified, condom use became less of a preoccupation for both partners.

As for the toyboys/jeggs script, research participants on both sides of this friendship/relationship indicated that they were using condoms at all times. This was most certainly a safer sex practice imposed by jeggs on their toyboys. I found that Jigegs were much more realistic in their relationships with toyboys in the sense that they knew that their toyboys were engaging in sexual liaisons with other younger women. This was

in direct contrast of what was happening with sugar daddies who expected exclusivity from their sugar babies. In most cases, jigege provided the condoms themselves.

As Mam-Jarra, a 54 years old jigege said:

I know that my young boy has girlfriends in his age group, and that doesn't worry me. We both know what the friendship is all about, so we make sure that things are done right. I always ask him to use condoms because I want to make sure that I am ok. I know that he is not sleeping with me alone, so I can't be stupid (Interview December 2017).

Jigege are experienced with the socio-sexual norms that allow men to have multiple partners. They know that it is up to them to protect themselves and that they should not be romanticizing their sexual liaisons with toyboys, for they know that they are not be their toyboys' only sexual partners.

As for the Chepehs/Semesters script with respect to safer sexual practices, the quite interesting thing is that this relationship is grounded on complete distrust on both sides, which pushes them to both demand condom use during intercourse. Male semesters tend to harbor stereotypes that depict chepehs as easy and materialistic girls who are easily persuaded to open up for sexual favors with access to the material goodies semesters come with. Take for instance Saja, a 31-year-old semester from Sweden who commented:

You can't trust the chepehs because you know they have been around; whenever, I come back home, I come with a box of condoms, because I don't trust the one they sell here and I know that I am going to need them, you got to strap it up

because you don't know who these girls have been sleeping with (Interview January 2017).

Saja's comments are indicative of what most of the semesters think and shared with me when discussing safer sexual practices. Although many of them argue for the need to practice safer sex on one hand, on the other they subconsciously reproduce stereotypes about easy African women motivated by nothing but material things. Male semesters assert a sense of superiority over local Gambians; they don't even trust the condoms sold in the country. In essence, they adhere to a global ordering of things according to which all things coming from the Global North are worthy to consume and use as opposed to what is produced locally or in the African region. This being said, I was able to observe semesters behave, and otherwise overheard conversations in groups of male semesters I hung around with during my fieldwork, which show that sometimes semesters form a bond of affection with a chepeh, which brings them to "let their guards down." When that happens, the semesters often justified their risky sexual behaviors by explaining that their chepehs were a virgin, that they took their virginity, and that she was completely innocent, unlike the other girls.

Gambian and other West African men who have sex with men are identified as a "most-at-risk key population" when it comes to HIV prevalence rate. In The Gambia, MSM have an HIV prevalence of 9.8%, which compares to the national average of 1.7% (Mason et al 2013; Mah and Dibba 2008). Male and female sex workers bear the burden of HIV infections in the country, and in Sub-Saharan Africa in general. The political climate during the Jammeh regime made accessing MSM extremely difficult. Many of my MSM interlocutors were men who reported having girlfriends or wives. As such,

they didn't identify as gay or homosexual. They are not exclusively sexually active with other men. This is in great part tied to the political and cultural stigma and discrimination leveled at MSM. These structural issues put them at a very high risk to engage in sexual behaviors with low condom use and a lack of lubrication for anal intercourse (Mah and Dibba 2008; Mason et al 2013; Niang et al 2004). In much of Africa, The Gambia included, same-sex sexuality is illegal and highly stigmatized. To only take one example, in May of 2008 President Jammeh declared all homosexuals *persona non grata* and threatened to decapitate them if they didn't leave the country. Unlike what has been taking place in the Global North, where MSM have formal social networks and advocacy groups working for the defense of their human rights, nothing of the sort is happening in The Gambia. In the society at large, no Gambian man openly identifies as a gay men. However, many MSM are able to identify each other by taking chances on finding out who is an MSM and who isn't. Even if they know about one another, many keep their sexuality a secret. Many of my MSM interlocutors shared during group discussions that they must make sure to have a girlfriend or a wife in order to conceal their sexuality and meet socio-sexual expectations of masculinity performance. In fact, during the counseling sessions offered by the UNAID Network, they are encouraged to conceal their sexuality by engaging in heterosexual relationships to fit into Gambian socio-sexual norms. The MSM I interviewed said that a majority of their sexual activities consist of infrequent sexual liaisons with casual partners. Some have stable partners living in Senegal or Guinea. So these MSM travel to Dakar, Senegal to be with their lovers and/or interact with other MSM. The reverse is also the case. MSM like to spend time in contexts in

which they do not have kin members who could identify them. Ousainou, a 25-year-old MSM, told me:

I have a boyfriend who lives in Senegal. I go visit him and he does the same with me. My family thinks that we are just friends. One day we hope to get married, since we are exclusive, we don't need to use a condom (Group discussion December 2016).

Ousainou's comment was met with a response from Don, the oldest in the group, who told him to be careful because "he doesn't know what the boy is doing in Dakar."

Ousainou insisted that he knows.

Don, the most experienced in the group, often warned the other MSM about the importance of protecting themselves at all times:

You see sister, some of these boys are young, they take a lot of chances, they don't use condom. That is why they are getting sick with the disease. They are not thinking, they are just excited by the thrill and not the consequences, so it is up to us to let them know because of our experiences (Group discussion December 2016).

Don's comment is quite poignant for it speaks to the discontent that young MSM have when it comes to sexual risk and HIV/STI transmission. During our discussions and informal interviews, several of them revealed that condom use was not particularly high priority for them. They did not seem to understand the increased risk linked with anal sex and infection through blood contact (see Mah and Dibba 2008; Mason et al 2013).

When the issue of lubrication came up, a few were unaware of lubrication. Others knew and said that proper lubrication was unavailable in the country (see Mah and Dibba

2008). All these factors lead to making MSM engaged in high risk sexual behaviors which leaves them exposed to HIV/STIs transmission.

### **The Gambia's Tourism-Based Sexual Economy and HIV Risk Behaviors**

The lack of economic opportunities, and the political, social and economic changes brought about by the tourism industry, have pushed many young Gambians to migrate from rural provinces to urban coastal areas in search of work. In so doing, many of these young men and women find themselves working in the formal economy of the tourism industry (as taxi drivers, hotel workers, tour guides, masseuses, waiters, etc.), which brings them meager salaries. This situation encourages them to supplement their incomes by engaging in the informal economy, where they eventually end up participating in affective-sexual interactions with Global North tourists. This speaks to the fluid nature of their labor, where they intertwine formal work with informal labor in the tourism-based affective-sexual economy. Both male and female sex workers underscore the importance of working in the tourism industry, which facilitate their ability to enter in contact with Global North tourists. In fact, many young Gambians of both sex take up such jobs that consist in bringing tourists to local businesses, for which they are paid a commission. They like these kind of jobs because they give them opportunities to come in contact with Global North tourists. Similar findings have been reported in the Caribbean (see Brennan 2004; Cabezas 2009; Kempadoo 1999; Padilla et al 2010; O'Connell Davidson & Sanchez Taylor 1999).

These Gambian workers have a preference for tourists because they imagined them to come with wealth and opportunities that could potential improve their life chances for economic and social mobility. Their contacts with tourists present them with

higher risk for HIV transmission. They have a high HIV prevalence because they face barriers to negotiate condom use, and as a consequence they are at a higher risk of sexual vulnerability. Padilla et al (2010) suggest that there are four major evidence that suggest that local contact with the tourism industry may involve certain high risks: (1) the high HIV prevalence rates among sex workers and their clients, (2) the high rates of HIV risk behaviors in tourism areas, (3) the demographic changes resulting from labor migration, and (4) alcohol and drug use in tourism area (Padilla et al 2010:4). All four evidences speak to the Gambian context in that sex workers, especially female sex workers, have a high HIV prevalence (15.9 %), which is almost 14 times that of the national average. Unfortunately, we do not have data for male sex workers who engage in heterosexual and affective exchanges with Global North female tourists. For many of my interlocutors who engage in the tourism-based sexual economy, they all admitted to not be using condoms all the time. If a tourist-friend doesn't ask for one, then they don't push the issue further, which reveal that both Gambians and Global North tourists are willingly engaging in risky sexual behaviors. My fieldwork and my interviews have uncovered the fact that there is heavy alcohol and drug (cocaine and freebasing) use among male sex workers and some West African non-Gambian female sex workers. Marijuana and other illicit drugs are on sale in the tourism areas.

Momadou, a 23 years old chanter, once told me about drug use among chanters: Here the boys are doing a lot of stuff that are not *haram*. They are drinking alcohol because the toubabs wants you to drink with them. Sometimes they even have access to coke. So if you are not careful, you end being ruined, because you become a junky (Interview December 2016).

In my participant-observations during fieldwork, in many restaurants and bars that cater to tourists, the atmosphere is constructed in such a way that you have the feeling of being involved in a big more-or-less spontaneous genuine party, and that you are not in a space where more-or-less organized encounters with sex workers take place. In these spaces, heavy drinking and dancing take place, which leads to hook-ups. These hook-ups often lead to both Gambians and Global North tourists engaging in sexually risky behaviors. Other chanters alluded to the fact that many female tourists at times, when they have confidence in you, don't want to use condoms because they want to feel the real thing. Take the statement from Pa Njie, a 25-year-old chanter:

You know, these toubabs are very funny sometimes. They always want to know if your johnbull is big. They say that they want to feel it. They will say things like I want to experience the real Africa... You know what they say about black men and their big stuff, so they will not want you to put a condom on because they want to feel it hard (Interview January 2017).

These statements were echoed by MSM who have been involved in sexual exchanges with male tourists. That is often the tourists who request for them not to wear a condom because they wanted to feel the real thing—i.e. the racialized imagined big penis of an African/black man. Kasim, a 21 years old MSM, said:

These toubabs, when they come to you, they offer you a lot for you to take them, any ways I always take them because for me a toubab cannot take me and I need the money, so I usually give it to them good, because I know that this is what they are looking for from me (Interview December 2016).

As reported to me by MSM interlocutors as well as according to the contents of the 2015 Gambia Global AIDS Response Progress Report, MSM self-reported to engage frequently in unprotected anal intercourse with low use of lubricants, factors that contribute to their exposure to HIV/STIs infections.

Many female sex workers revealed that they didn't always use condoms. Their use of it depended on the quality of their relationships with the toubabs. Although in Ashley Grosso et al.'s (2015) cross-sectional survey on the correlation of condom use among female sex workers, many FSWs had a high report of using condom (95%) with new clients (Grosso et al 2015). However, that study didn't highlight which FSW worked in brothels serving local men, and which worked in the tourism-based sexual economy: a very important distinction. One of the major obstacles that prevented sex workers from seeking health services was the fear of being seen or identified as a "sex worker." Among the local brothel-based female sex workers I had a group discussion with, it was jokingly said that many of the new sex workers often did not use condoms with clients due to their inexperience, which left them vulnerable to be duped by clients, who offer more money to have sex without the use of a condom. Aisatou, a brothel-based female sex worker said the following, while laughing:

The new chagas do not use condoms, because they don't know any better. Often when the clients ask to take them natural, they say yes when the money is right. So they go for the money without thinking about themselves. The clients know the new ones, so they test them to see if they will be willingly to do it natural. Some of these men are wicked (Group discussion December 2016).

Being new to the trade also puts one at a higher risk because one's inexperience makes one vulnerable in the negotiation to use a condom, especially when the "price is right" or that you have "confidence" in your friendship with a specific toubab. Although various studies in Sub-Saharan Africa have found that age was a major factor influencing condom use. To take one example, among FSWs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 20 to 44 years old FSWs were more likely to use condoms consistently with clients than those under the age of 20 (Kayembe et al 2008). Senegalese FSWs between ages 40 and 50 were more likely to use condoms with nonpaying partners than the 20 to 30 years old FSWs (Wang et al 2007). Therefore, rather than focusing on an FSW age, it is important to seek out those who are new in the trade, so that they can be given the tools and knowledge needed to protect themselves. My various discussions and interviews with female and male sex workers revealed that condom use frequencies vary greatly. Socio-sexual scripts followed by sex workers quite often put them in vulnerable positions, along with socio-economic factors. There is a need for contextually appropriate responses to HIV/STIs that takes into account Gambian socio-sexual norms, gender roles, and the tourism-based affective-sexual economy.

### **Yahya Jammeh's Narcissist and Cruel Phony Claims To Cure HIV/AIDS**

In January 2007, immediately following an electoral victory, Jammeh announced to Gambians and the World that he could cure AIDS and Asthma using secret herbs named in the Quran. He said that his interest in wanting to find a cure came out of concerns that HIV predominantly affected Africans because of racism and Western pharmaceutical companies who wanted to make money on the back of Africans. While this discourse had been used by many activists fighting to get drug companies to reduce the prices of their

products and provide free intellectual property rights so that many can have access to cheaper drugs and survive. Jammeh manipulated that discourse to bolster his claims that he can cure AIDS. He had the state of The Gambia run a bogus treatment program. Three survivors of Jammeh's phony program said that he targeted them and picked them because they were members of an HIV and AIDS support groups (see their interviews on [www.aidsfreeworld.org](http://www.aidsfreeworld.org)).

Once chosen by Jammeh, they were enrolled in the program and ordered to stop taking their anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) and any other biomedical medicines. Enrollees were then taken to a treatment center located in the State House, where they were not permitted to leave the premises or have any contact with their families and friends, they were essentially held captives while experimented on. Jammeh gave them home-brew herbal concoctions he had done himself, by slathering the substance on his victim's bodies or forcing them to drink it in a liquid form. Some of these treatment sessions were broadcasted on the Gambian national television (Gambian Radio and Television Station or GRTS) without having obtained the authorization of the patients who had not yet disclosed their HIV status to family and friends. They were stigmatized for the rest of their lives. Lamin Cessay, a 62-years-old victim who went into Jammeh's center with his wife who eventually died, was the first person in The Gambia to publicly announce his HIV status on World AIDS Day in December 2000 told Aids-Free World staff the following: I cannot even count the number of people who died during the treatment, many more died, after they were declared "cured" and discharged from the center (see [www.aidsfreeworld.org](http://www.aidsfreeworld.org)). Fatou Jatta, a 51-year-old such victim of Jammeh's bizarre claims, was the first Gambian to be declared "treated." She referred to her experience in

Jammeh's "lab" as "a disaster." She explained how she progressively grew weaker during her nine months of treatment, but that didn't stop the Jammeh from declaring her cured. She was near death when she was discharged, and only recovered when she went back to her ARVS.

In my interview with Brother Malcolm, when discussing this particular period in Gambian history, he said the following:

This was a very dark time in this country, a lot of people died, many who were in our programs left and went to seek help from the President. Smart people, even a closed friend of mine, somehow stop taking their ARVs and went to seek treatment from Jammeh. I was shocked and appalled. It was very cruel, and people died or got even sicker. The man is crazy (Interview December 2016).

Perhaps it is difficult for folks like Brother Malcolm to understand why and how a person with an HIV infection and on the only medication that has been showed to work against HIV/AIDS patients would abandon it to seek treatment from Jammeh's center, even knowing intellectually that there was no known cure for the illness. This, I would say, is largely related to Gambians' general practice to seek local medicine in combination with biological medicine to deal with illnesses. A cultural practice that Jammeh was familiar with and used in the most cruel way possible. He made a mockery of traditional healing and as a result ended the lives of many who entered his program in search of a cure. Jammeh's acts in bogusly treating his victims were another aspect of the sick terror he was inflicting upon Gambians. Those who criticized his treatment program suffered retaliation. He even expelled UN officials who at the time challenged the legitimacy of

his claims. This was a blatant case of a Ubuesque tyrant abusing his power over his people in the most cruel and dangerous way.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I sought to put in context how socio-sexual actors in the Gambian sexscape and within the tourism-based sexual economy assess and deal with sexual risks and particularly with HIV/AIDS prevention. Findings from my group discussions and interviews suggest that socio-sexual actors generally framed unsafe sexual behaviors in terms related to Gambian socio-sexual norms, which come with particular affection-providing regimes and unequal access to socio-economic capital.

Many Gambian men and women are confronted with poverty, economic insecurity, socio-legal constraints and structural violence and marginality, in their struggle for sexual health. Instead of having state prevention programs simply identify and target most-at-risk groups, programs should be geared towards lifting the veil about sex and sexualities. Basic sexual health should be included in the curriculum of primary schools. Socio-sexual norms that makes it difficult for young and old people to openly talk about sex and sexualities should be done away with. During my fieldwork, I was at times shocked and surprised to see how many adults held inaccurate ideas about sex and sexualities, things that many teenagers in the Global North take as a given. Gambian children and teenagers who have been deprived from sexual health education grow up as adults with very little knowledge about STIs in general, which puts them at a greater risk of infection. The right sex education, sensitive to specifically Gambian socio-sexual understandings would give both girls and boys the right tools to exercise their own sexual agency while protecting their sexual health. This is particularly important for women

(especially FSWs), who are disproportionately impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. So arming girls with the right tools to negotiate condom use with boyfriends, husbands, and lovers protects them when they exercise their sexual agency.

Another important component of the general sexual health of the country is the view of the tourism-based affective-sexual economy as “ecologies of heightened vulnerability” that contribute to HIV/STIs transmission of mobile people in and around tourism (Padilla et al 2010). Identified most-at-risk groups, such as sex workers, fisherman, truckers, MSM, and uniformed personnel are all actors who operate in the tourism development area (TDA). Better prevention programs are needed. Multiple studies conducted in different Global South locations around the world suggest that tourism areas are important high risk environments that involve vulnerable internal and external migrants, tourists, sexual economies, high levels of alcohol and drug use, all leading to high levels of sexual risky behaviors. These high levels of sexual risk spill over to the surrounding communities and beyond. So, rather than treating and targeting individuals operating in the tourism industry in isolation, there must be a comprehensive effort to engage families, and communities at large.

Although by most standards in sub-Saharan Africa, The Gambia’s national HIV rate is low, access to, and use of ARVs drugs are low among those infected. The socio-sexual actors I highlighted throughout the dissertation point to the need to engage in a more nuanced approach to condom use and prevention programs. For many of my interlocutors, their relative knowledge about HIV/AIDS did not necessarily translate into a better use of condoms during sexual intercourse with partners or nonpaying partners. Condoms must be widely available, especially in the tourism industry, in hotels and

guest- houses. Currently, female sex workers who seek help and are enrolled in health care services are given condoms. Some of them serve as peer counselor to their colleagues in order to promote condom use. From my observation, such peer support allowed FSWs to feel empowered in taking care of their sexual health. Sex workers are not benign risk takers, for they try their best to use condoms with partners, they clean themselves, and they pray for protection. If given the opportunity, they are able to develop strategies to mitigate risks and adapt to new situations. The same could be said about male sex workers. However, many of them don't see themselves as "sex workers." They fear stigmatization and do not seek help nor enroll in health care services. So they often go on without being tested and do not have access to condoms for free. Quite frankly, they are not vigorously targeted for prevention as are female sex workers. This—I believe—in great part due to socio-sexual gender norms. Some of these norms must be confronted with if we are to have prevention programs that reach male sex workers who continue to be involved with their wives.

Gambian MSM have the highest sexual risk exposure for HIV acquisition, primarily due to unprotected anal intercourse. There is also a lack of available lubricant, and HIV-related knowledge. This suggests that providing sexual health education, ensuring access to condoms and lubricant could serve to provide meaningful preventive methods to MSM. This alone is not enough to curb out the epidemic among MSM in the country. Their social stigma, and their legal and structural marginalizations also need to be addressed. The decriminalization of same-sex sexuality must be achieved so as to give them the rightful ability to step out of the shadows and seek the services they need and

deserve. The fear of socio-legal and structural violence is affecting the sexual health of MSM, and that is something that cannot be glossed over.

The overall dissertation and its chapters present important ethnographic data that should be helpful to those concerned to fight heads-on HIV prevalence in The Gambia. I am advocating the development of multilevel prevention strategies to target individuals', communities', and structural issues within the tourism-based affective-sexual economy and the Gambian sexscape more generally.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation, my theoretical disposition has been to analyze the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy by locating it within the larger socio-economic and political processes that have led to the formation of contemporary Gambian society. I have been determined to avoid the cutting-off of the sexual encounters of Global North tourists with Gambian and other West African sex workers from their immediate sociocultural and economic contexts and situations. My main objective has been to show how much necessary—if one wants to make sense of tourism-based sexual and affective economies—it is to embed the interactions between tourists and locals within the larger local socio-sexual contexts in which they unfold. That is the only way to fully take into consideration local perspectives' on their participation in the tourism-based sexual and affective economy. I have been inspired by anthropologists whose research and writings on tourism sexual economies and their rightful critique of essentialist comparative analytics have highlighted the complexity of lived realities in tourism (Brennan 2004; Cabezas 2009; Frohlick 2013; Jacobs 2010; Padilla 2007). In this dissertation, my intention has been to move beyond the still-too-limited contextualizing intentions of these scholars. The theoretical and methodological toolbox I have put together has entirely been at the service of such a project. Sexual encounters never take place in a vacuum and are always necessarily embedded within specific sociocultural realities that inform all of their aspects.

This dissertation's theoretical framework, its methodological approaches, and its findings and analyses allow me to make a few fundamental points in these conclusions.

The affective-sexual and socio-sexual interactions that take place in the tourism-based sexual economy (the following socio-sexual scripts: FSW and Global North male tourists, chanters and Global North female tourists, and MSM sex workers and Global North tourists and Gambian semesters) have a materialist dimension whereas affection and sexual access is exchanged for compensation(s), even if not necessarily in the form of a payment directly following sexual intercourse. The material dimension of these interactions within the tourism-based sexual economy does not differ—on the contrary—from similar material exchanges that accompany sexual access in the other scripts of the Gambian sexscape discussed in chapters 3 and 4. Indeed, a husband is expected to be the breadwinner and material provider of his family. In The Gambia, assuming and performing such a role is construed as the proper way to be a man. In exchange for that fulfilled masculine responsibility, and notwithstanding the multidimensionality of the relationship they might have, a wife is to be sexually available to her husband. Africanist anthropologists and historians alike have explored at length how intimacies and sexualities in many African contexts are tied to money, goods, and the economic conditions (see Cole 2010; Groes-Green 2014; Foley and Drame 2013; Hunter 2010; Magubane 2004; Nyamjoh 2005; Nyanzi et al 2005). Such work is great for its clarifying the distinction between “commercial sex work” and “sexual labor,” which clearly explains why all the Gambian sociocultural actors involved in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy can be seen as engaging in sexual labor. However, these authors exclusively focus their attention on these relationships’ materiality and do not really consider their affective and social dimensions. The relationship between sugar babies and sugar daddies, and between jigeg and toyboys provide additional unambiguous

illustrations of this almost universal exchange of material resources for sexual access and affectionate exchanges. More complex analyses are required when dealing with such cross-generational relationship. My research reveals that older African women with resources—much like their male counterparts do—are able to secure access to sexual and affective intimacy on their own terms, in a society that works to retire older women’s sexuality.

The lexicon of “friendship” allows Gambian male sex workers more so than Gambian female sex workers to overcome the social stigma that accompanies their sharing intimacy with Global North tourists. While women who are known to hang out with Global North tourists and engage in affective-sexual interactions with them will never be able to escape the stigma of being a chaga or prostitute, male sex workers are not vilified the same way, in accordance with the gender inequalities of the particularly patriarchal character of Gambian society, which gives men more license for sexual mobility. I know of male sex workers who were successful in obtaining financial gifts from a toubab “friend” to begin a small business. When doing so, no one questioned the source of the money. In other cases, most people applaud when a chanter is successful to secure legal emigration to Europe thanks to a “friend’s” sponsorship. In order to escape the social stigma that comes with their labor, female sex workers often must leave the country altogether to begin a new life elsewhere in West Africa (Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, or Liberia).

As explained in the Introduction, I took the decision to embark in the research necessary for the writing of this dissertation as I understood the significance of the absence of Gambian voices and perspectives in the existing literature. I also quickly

understood that this characteristic was not limited to the Gambian case in sub-Saharan Africa, but instead was shared across the region. As I complete this dissertation, I am already conceiving of further research that should allow me to provide more details on some aspects of what I have called the Gambian sexscape. Such additional research will contrast with my writing entirely at the service of re-constructing a kaleidoscopic, more general view of the Gambian sexscape. I definitively plan to extend what I have already done with the semesters' participation in the Gambian tourism-based sexual economy. Indeed, generally speaking, diasporan tourists' participation in tourism-based sexual economies remains a marginal focus of research in the sex tourism literature. And this is the case everywhere in the Global South. The Gambia and its "semesters" certainly provide an ideal case study to deconstruct further. Likewise, I plan to delve on the jigege and toyboys relationships, which are—I suspect—in existence elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

Lastly, this research's ethnographic materials call for HIV/STIs prevention programs to widen the scope of prevention. From a socio-ecological approach, the tourism industry provides a space for the confluence of sex, migration, drugs and alcohol use, along with the involvement in multiple partnerships that potentially combine to increase the spread of HIV/STIs in the country. Such prevention programs must engage the tourism industry and its different stakeholders to provide more holistic prevention programs to support the country's efforts to curb out the spread. This calls for broader shifts in the ways in which sexuality is dealt with in the country. Greater education and discussions about sexuality are needed. Sexuality must be moved away from the moralizing framework it has been imprisoned in. The criminalization of same-sex

sexuality runs contrary to goals and ideas of prevention for it pushes individuals into hiding, which puts them at a greater risk.

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## VITA

MARIAMA JAITEH

Born, Banjul, The Gambia

### EDUCATION

2013 – 2018	Ph.D. Candidate, Global and Socio-Cultural Studies Florida International University Miami, FL
2003 – 2004	LL.M, Intercultural Human Rights St. Thomas University School of Law Miami, FL
1998 – 2001	B.A., Department of Politics and International Relations Florida International University Miami, FL

### PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Film Reviews, “In Rwanda We Say... The Family that Does Not Speak Dies” (Anne Aghion, 2004) and “The Notebooks of Memory” (Anne Aghion, 2009). 2018. *Films of the Feminist Classroom*, Department of Women’s Studies, Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas.

“Why Do We Get Involved With Toubabs?: Gambian Men and Women’s Life Histories and Their Involvement in Tourism Sexual Economies.” Paper presentation. The Annual American Anthropological Association Meeting. Denver, Colorado, November 22, 2015.

What do the Toubabs Want? Conversations with “Business,’ ‘Bumsters,’ and Other Young Male and Female Gambians about Sex Tourism in The Gambia.” Paper presentation during The AADS & GSS Graduate Students Colloquium. The African and African Diaspora Studies Program, Florida International University, Miami, FL September 3, 2010.

What do the Toubabs Want? Conversations with “Business,’ ‘Bumsters,’ and Other Young Male and Female Gambians about Sex Tourism in The Gambia.” – Paper presentation, Session Title: “The Revelation, Re-Affirmation, and Re-Invention of Self through the Discovery, Consumption, and Experiencing of Others: Globalization and Interactions in Senegambian Tourism Formations.” The session took place at the

International Conference entitled, "Tourism and Seductions of Difference," Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal. September 8-11, 2010.