

# Social work within a Jamaican Rastafarian community

- A study of values regarding women

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## Abstract

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This is a qualitative field study of social work within the Rastafarian community in purpose to investigate how values regarding women within the group reflect in social work executed by Rastafarians. The Rastafarian group is often portrayed as patriarchal in the literature while there are ideals in social work to treat all people equally. Based on this, focus is on how Rastafarian social workers relate to the values and ideals which exist regarding women within the Rastafarian Community in their professional role. The paper provides a possible approach of how the Rastafarians role as social workers affects the Rastafarian Community's values regarding women.

Key words: Rasta group, social work, "Rastafarian community team", "social worker team", women, values, equality, patriarchal, faith, ideal, Jamaica, society, traditional.

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# 1 Introduction

My choice to search for material in a developing country to my essay for the Social work program at the University of Lund wasn't hard. I've always been interested in travelling and I love to learn about and discover new cultures. My idea about going to Jamaica and write about social work within the Rasta group started during my practice in Tanzania in the spring semester of 2012. In Tanzania I worked in an organization named "Women Craft", which aims at improving women's independence. In Tanzania the Rasta culture was a lot more common than in Sweden. When I saw the, for me, new lifestyle and met some local Rastafarian friends who told me about their belief, I got really curious and felt that this was something I wanted to know more about. They seemed so friendly and accepted me as one of them, although I was almost the only white person in the village. All this kindness made me think about how this view at our fellow human beings can effect the feeling of responsibility we have for other people. How can such friendliness show in practice? And can't this responsibility for others be compared with the disposal vision we often see in social work?

Back in Sweden I began reading a bit about the Rasta-culture and soon I realized that it's about a lot more than Marijuana and Reggae. I found that the culture has a lot of history, interesting values and rituals and that it has a great impact in the community. I also realized that the Rastafarianism is very spread in Jamaica, which is why I want to go there. My idea for the essay is to learn and write about how the social work is within the Rastafarian group. What is the history of the social work within the Rasta group and what values and what praxis is there? During my time in Africa I also realized that there is a great need for social work with women in many countries. I felt that work for, and with, women is a very interesting and important subject which I want to know more about. That is the reason why I have decided to focus especially on women in the research. Which values are there regarding women within the Rastafarian community and how do Rastafarian social workers relate to these values in their professional work?

## 1.1 Statement of problem

The Rastafarian group has a great influence in community in many fields, also when it comes to social work (Barnett, 2012) which makes the group an interesting research object. One problem is however that inequality still exists among many Rastafarians says Barnett:

There can be no denying the fact that Rastafari is a patriarchal movement. The male is at the head, having responsibility for conducting rituals, for interpreting events of significance to the community, and for the care and protection of the family as well as the community (Barnett, 2012. P. 178).

This is a problem which is very likely to impact the social work in society, which in turn could make the Rastafarian community to a social problem. Perhaps the values and ideals regarding women within the Rastafarian community have significance for the values within Rastafarians social work. At the same time, social work is clearly associated with ideals and values advocating an equal approach where social workers are expected to treat people equal (Hafford-Letchfield, 2011). The author Trish Hafford-Letchfield is, among other, writing about these ideals in his article and explains how values and ideals show clearly within social work education:

Concepts relating to equality issues such as social exclusion, marginalization, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice are familiar to social work education. This implies that the degree in social work adequately prepares students to fully embrace equality and diversity issues in a way that enables them to achieve 'cultural competence' in their practice. Professional codes of practice in the UK (Care Council for Wales, 2001; GSCC, 2002; NISCC, 2002; SSSC, 2005) set out a clear commitment and requirement for social workers and their employers to adhere to certain moral and ethical standards (Hafford-Letchfield, 2011. PP. 244-245).

Furthermore, Hafford-Letchfield explains that there is a tradition within social work to advocate justice and equality in community. According to this, becomes an interesting angle to explore how social work, which often seeks justice, go together with the Rastafarian community's discriminatory values and ideals regarding women. If the Rasta group actually is as patriarchal as the literature

describes is, an interesting angle to explore becomes how Rastafarian social workers handle these ideals in their work. As Karen D Stout describes it: “Social workers battle for social justice for their clients, but the waters are muddied when social workers themselves are affected” (D. Stout, 1998. P. 39).

It is possible that the Rastafarian social workers simply adopt the equal values from the social work and in turn becomes to be “agents of change” in purpose to make the Rastafarian community’s values more equal. This in turn would make social work to a normalizing project by invention in the Rastafarian community’s values in purpose to proactively change their values and ideals regarding women. Social workers could then be seen as tools in purpose to develop the society’s values in a more equal direction, which in turn make the Rastafarian social workers role interesting to explore. One angle to look into is for example how they relate to this clash between ideals and values. Further, another interesting aspect to investigate is what would happen if the Rastafarian social workers choose to adopt the equal values which are associated with the tradition within social work instead of the values which are regarding women within the Rastafarian community.

At the same time, Barnett believes that these norms and values within the Rastafarian community develop:

One cannot deny that revolutions are taking place within the cultural psyche of Rastafarian sistren and brethren - individually and as a collective. Intergenerational and international transitions and influences complicate this reality, resulting in a shift in paradigm and a change in the discourse of the ideology (Barnett, 2012. P. 196).

This development affects the perception of women within the Rasta group (Barnett, 2012) which leads to another interesting aspect to investigate. It is possible that this change is partly due to the ideals which the social work tries to imply within the Rastafarian community, which in turn could effect how Rastafarian social workers relate to values regarding women. Perhaps this development of the Rastafarian group is a sign for that the social work and social workers actually succeed in their intervention in the Rastafarian community, in purpose to make their values more equal. At the same time is possible that there



are forces within the Rastafarian community who are against this development, which makes this tension between the social workers and the Rastafarian group particularly interesting to investigate.

## **1.2 Purpose and questions**

### **1.2.1 Purpose**

I have chosen to study social work within the Rastafarian community in Jamaica. The purpose is to investigate how Rastafarian social workers relate to the values and ideals which exist regarding women within the Rastafarian community in their professional role. Based on this, I will also examine how the Rastafarians role as social workers affects the Rastafarian community's values regarding women. Focus is only on the three individuals I have chosen to interview and not on the Rastafarian Community in general which make the research to a case study. Since the Rastafarianism is a faith, an ideology, a philosophy of life and a part of the Jamaican culture, have I chosen to define me and focus on the Rastafarians as a group.

### **1.2.2 Questions**

- How do Rastafarian social workers, in their professional role, relate to the values which exist regarding women within the Rastafarian community?

## **2 Background and previous research**

### **2.1 Background: History of the Rasta group**

The Rastafarian group was developed by Leonard Percival Howell who established the first Rastafarian community, Pinnacle, in Jamaica in 1940. At that time "...Rastas were still regarded as useless, lazy, half-insane, ganja-smoking illiterates who were of no value of society" (Barrington Edmonds, 2003). Since then, the Rastafarian group and the view at it have developed a lot, according to B. Edmonds:

Since its emergence among the poor in Jamaica in the early 1930s, the Rastafarian movement has progressed from being an obscure group of protesting outcasts in the ghettos of West Kingston to being a movement firmly entrenched in Jamaican society. From Jamaica, the movement has spread around the world, especially among oppressed people of African origin (B. Edmonds, 2003. P. 3).

Another person who had a great significance in the development of the Rastafarianism was Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Garvey advocated a “back-to-Africa” cause and advocated Black Power. Through UNIA, the Rastafarianism also got spread overseas (2003). Although the Rastafarian group often is associated to people of African descent, B. Edmonds describes, that Rastafari has been embraced by persons from numerous other ethnic groups around the world. This is especially evident among those who perceive themselves as suffering some form of oppression and marginalization, says Edmonds. Furthermore, he explains how the Rasta movement has been known over the world through many factors: “...the Rastafarian movement has made itself felt across the globe through the influence it has exerted on popular music and fashion (clothing, hairstyles, personal accessories, and so on)” (B. Edmonds, 2003. P. 3).

One thing that Rastafarians have in common is their faith in Haile Selassie, who was the late Emperor of Ethiopia. There appears, however, to be diverse opinions among Rastafarians regarding the divinity of Haile Selassie (Barnett, 2012). Some Rasta believes for example that he is the Triunity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) while others believe that he is the father of Jesus Christ. At the same time, many Rastafarians do not accept the divinity of Haile Selassie at all; instead they look up to him as “just” a king (Barnett, 2012).

Although all Rastafarians have their faith in Haile Selassie (as king or God) in common, Barnett points out that there are many different orientations within the Rasta movement:

Although Robert Hinds and Leonard Howell collaborated to a large extent during the early thirties, Dunkley and Hibbert preached to a large extent independently (Smith, Nettleford, and Augier, 1960) so that even during

formative years of the movement there were multiple mansions of Rastafari. The movement has always been characterized by its heterogeneity and has never ever really been a homogenous entity, even in the every early days of its existence in Jamaica (Barnett, 2012. P. 2).

This in turn leads to variety groups of Rastafarians, says Barnett:

...I acknowledge the fact that Rastafaris is made of diverse groups otherwise known as mansions or houses (Chevannes 1998a; Barnett 2005). Scholars of Rastafari have identified some major groups : the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the Nyagbinghi Order, and the Bobo Shanti (Barnett 2005). The Belief of these scholars is that there are hardly any essential characteristics common to these houses that can identify them as belonging to the Rastafari movement. Thus, Chevannes observed that “Rastafari in an acephalous movement. There are groups, quasi-groups and individuals, who while sharing the core beliefs, nevertheless remain separate and independent” (1998a, 31) (Barnett, 2012. P. 130).

In summary, there are not identifiable commonalities that define Rastafarians as a group. Instead there are groups with similar and related beliefs and practices within the Rastafarian movement (Barnett, 2012).

## **2.2 Previous research**

### **2.2.1 Rastafarian values and social work**

There is a lot written about the Rastafarian community but I haven't found any literature which describes more specific if, and if that is the case how, Rastafarian values effect Rastafarian social workers in their jobs. Therefore, my purpose is to examine this. However, when it comes to social work the Rastafarian group established a working code against sexual envy, greed and dishonesty, aberration and exploitation. But it has also brought a positive competitive spirit into job efficiency, sports and games as well as it has maintained a pride in black history. This is especially evident in the Jamaican society, says B. Edmonds, and describes the relation between the Rastafarian movement and the wider Jamaican society like this:

Since the early 1970s, Rastafari has been recognized as a positive force in Jamaican society and has become the object of cooperation by political and commercial interests... The Rastafarian phenomenon is "an integral aspect of the larger matrix of black religious nationalism, folk revivalism, and Jamaican resistance to the plantation economy and state". As such, Rastafari is rooted in the rejection of the legitimacy of the Jamaican social system and in resistance to its values and social arrangements (B.Edmonds, 2003. P. 79).

Furthermore, the multiculturalism is very typical for the values in Rastafari, says Barnett, and describes how respect for different groups seems to become a trend in the world:

Multiculturalism advocates for the principle of recognition, especially in the pluralist society in which the Rastafari have found themselves. This recognition has to be negotiated with the members of the society. This is the trend in the world, and the Rastafari cannot afford discount this fact. The principle of multiculturalism respects the right of different groups to exist, but the different groups must be aware that this can only happen when there is cooperation based on such moral notions as equality, fairness, and justice (Barnett, 2012. P. 136).

Barnett (2012) also believes that the Rastafarian values and worldview has a great impact at society in general, not at least in Caribbean. Therefore, he quotes Henry: "The importance of Rastafarianism is not in the size of its following, indeed the number of members is small. Rather the worldview and value system expounded has permeated not only Jamaica, but also a good bit of the Caribbean as well" (2012, 164). However, Barnett discusses further whether Rastafarians has lived to these ideals in practice or if there is a gap between the Rastafarian philosophy and practice.

Finally, Ennis Barrington Edmonds describes in his book *Rastafari – From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* how many Rasta start their own voluntary organizations based on their own interests and goals:

Rastas have also formed various voluntary organizations (sometimes legally registered) dedicated to the accomplishment of particular goals. Some Rastas refer to these mansions, because compared to the houses

which include maybe ten to fifteen Rastas, the mansions often have hundreds of members. Conversely, as I discovered during my research, many a high-sounding Rastafarian organization exists in name only with no definite location or membership, except the person who conceived it in first place (Barrington Edmonds, 2003. P. 70).

According to B. Edmonds thus these voluntary is a usual kind of social work among Rastafarians (2003).

### **2.3 Values regarding women within the Rasta group**

In *Rastafari in the New Millenium* (2012), Michael Barnett describes the situation of women like this:

There can be no denying the fact that Rastafari is a patriarchal movement. The male is at the head, having responsibility for conducting rituals, for interpreting events of significance to the community, and for the care and protection of the family as well as the community. Rastafari is based on the Bible; it therefore follows that its structure in philosophy would pattern that which unfolds in the bible (Barnett, 2012, P. 178).

It is well-known that very little attention has been paid to the situation of women within the Rastafari group (Barnett, 2012). One possible explanation to that might be because males more easily declare to be Rastafarians. But it can also depend on the fact that men do not consider women to integrate in the Rasta group based on the ideals that status, leadership, prophecy and healing rest with the man (ibid). Anyway, there is no doubt that the Rastafarianism is primarily created for and by men. This is especially evident in the Bible, the holy book and guide for many Rastafarians. As Barnett describes it:

The Bible is a sacred book for most Rastafarians. It is an important source of guidance and inspiration (Yawney 1978, 99). To understand Rastafari attitudes toward females it is necessary to understand the role of females in the bible (2012, P. 178).

Further, Barnett declare that a clear pattern for women within the Rasta group is showing in the Bible. The stories are told primary about men, women are seen

only as an "appendage" to them. The first female in the Bible is unfavorably mentioned, which often is seen as clear warning against potential evil in female, according to many Rastafarian men. How they relate to this, however, is very different: Some males are very sympathetic in their response and believes that the evil was in the devil and Eve was the victim, while other argues that the female is impure and must be kept from corrupting the male (Barnett, 2012).

Barnett means, however, that this masculine view within the Rasta group not only is because of the Bible:

Although the Bible obviously played a large part in determine the attitude of male to female in RastafarI, other factors seemed to have had a reinforcing effect on attitudes and expectations of female behavior.

Rastafari, it must be noted, was first articulated by males. As it evolved, the movement was regarded as a cult of outcasts whose members bordered on the ridiculous, if not insane. Females wound, of necessity, be wary of involvement with a male without any obvious prospects (Barnett, 2012. P. 180).

He explains further that one of the reasons why women marry in the Jamaican culture is to advance economically and socially. This might reinforce the image of women as unreliable within the Rasta group, says Barnett: "The fact that researches have documented repeatedly the Rastaman's belief that a women is not a Rasta `in heart` and comes and goes as she pleases (Kitzinger 1969, P. 252) is evidence enough)" (2012, P. 180).

Finally, Barnett elucidate for four points about women within the Rastafarian group which, in general, many males accept. The first of them is that only a man can make a women "sight" Rastafari, which is the reason why she can't be a leader in any Rastafarian ritual and only is called to Rastafari through a male. The second point is that the man is the spiritual and physical head of both the women and the family. This means that the women must search for guidance in husband in all spiritually things. Thirdly, a woman needs a head or kingman to be able to experience the "highest heights" of RastafarI and finally, a woman is unclean during her period (2012).

## 3 Theoretical perspective

### 3.1 My use of Goffman's Theatrical metaphor

I am using Goffman's definition about team in purpose to understand how Rastafarians as a community can be seen in relation to the social workers. According to Goffman's metaphor (1959), the Rastafarian group could be explained as one team with formal and informal rules and expectations on its members, while social workers could be explained as another team. These teams could be described as "*Rasta community team*" and "*Social worker (professional) team*". Goffman's metaphor highlights further the clash between these two teams, which seem to have different values and ideals, and provide a possible explanation of what can happen when these meet teams meet. Focus is however on the Rastafarian social workers which are caught between two teams with different rules and goals which they are expected to adapt to at the same time. This highlights the problems that can arise when an individual is expected to represent two groups with different ideals and values.

Since the social workers I have chosen to use in my investigation belong to both non-governments organizations and to state-owned organizations and don't are counted as government officials or as educated social workers, is it difficult to put them in a special field. This is why I have chosen to use Goffman's team concept as a profession theory instead of applying any of the usual professional theoretical concepts. Goffman's team concept might, instead of focusing on social work as a limited profession, provide a broader picture of the social workers as a group.

Furthermore, Goffman's metaphor gives a possible explanation to why traditional values regarding women within the "Rasta community team" don't seem to show within Rastafarians social work. This illuminates how formal and informal rules and goals can strengthen a group and make it more uniform, which in turn gives a possible explanation to why certain ideals and values seem to be retained within a team. In addition, Goffman's metaphor highlights the effecton I as an interviewer and the community has on the Rastafarian social workers, which in turn very likely effects the results I've got.

### 3.2 Goffman's Theatrical metaphor

Erving Goffman resembles human life with a theater. He believes that we all play theater and, like an actor on stage, wants to make an impression on the audience. Therefore, we are taking new roles steadily from the expectations we feel we have from the environment to fit in the different contexts. In his book *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1959) Goffman explains, among other things, how we act on the basis of established frameworks. According to Goffman, thus individuals always try to live up to the outer performances available to him/her in this context. Observers of this behavior (actors) are the people around the individual, which he compares with the audience in a theater (1959). This represents a limitation for the individual, says Goffman, while he believes that this spectacle has a meaning:

Although some information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what we will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him (Goffman, 1959. P. 13).

This in turn leads to collaboration between the "public" and the "actor" in which the individual tries to live up to the audience expectations, while expectations are reinforced when the public gets what they expected. In this way the individual's way of being legitimizes and becomes increasingly difficult to change (1959).

According to these expectations, Goffman describes further, people also try to live up to seem a little bit better than they are:

If we never tried to seem a little bit better than we are, how could we improve or "train ourselves from the outside inward?" And the same impulse to show the world a better idealized aspect of ourselves finds an organized expression in the various professions and classes, each of which has to some extent a cant or pose, which its members assume unconsciously, for the most part, but which has the effect of a conspiracy to work upon the credulity of the rest of the world (Goffman, 1959. P. 35).



Furthermore, Goffman explains that legitimizing of individuals behaviors starts already from the beginning when we grow up. He describes this as a socialization and means that we from the start socializes into the community to fit the environment: “This constitutes one way in which a performance is "socialized", molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented” (Goffman, 1959. P. 35). This socialization leads in turn to that people present themselves according to the expectations from society, says Goffman, and explains further how people seems to behave according to society’s values: “Thus, when an individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole” (Goffman, 1959. P. 35).

Erving Goffman thus believes that humans always act as if they are at a stage when they are around other people. We always try to provide an image of ourselves as a person and of ourselves in relation to others by maintaining a “façade” to the outside world. According to Goffman, a large part of our performances is based on this facade, which is what we show outwardly. But these façades is not only applied on individuals, says Goffman, also groups try to produce images of them. Goffman calls these groups *teams* and describes them like this:

A team, then, may be defined as a set of individuals whose intimate co-operation is required if a given project definition of the situation is to be maintained. A team is a grouping, but it is a grouping not in relation to a social structure or social organization but rather in relation to an interaction or series of interactions in which the relevant definition of the situation is maintained (Goffman, 1959. P. 104).

Thus, it is important that the image the team shows outwardly is coherent and credible at the same time as it has to maintain the definition of the situation. To create and maintain that the image of the group, teams have common formal and informal rules about how individuals within them may occur, Goffman describes.

Further, he explains that members of teams also are expected to play down or conceal facts in purpose to maintain the definition of the situation:

Since we all participate on teams we must all carry within ourselves something of the sweet guilt of conspirators. And since each team is engaged in maintaining the stability of some definitions of the situation, concealing or playing down certain facts in order to do this, we can expect the performer to live out his conspiratorial career in some furtiveness (Goffman, 1959. P. 105).

According to this adaption to the situation, it possible to participate in more than one team at once says Goffman, which gives a possible explanation to how Rastafarian social workers could be credible members of both the “Rasta community team” and the “social worker team” at the same time.

### **3.3 Definition of terms**

In this chapter, I have chosen to define important concepts which I use in my discussion (6.1 and 6.2), based on my own subjective view. This is to make clear to the reader what I mean in my discussions:

**Discriminating:** A disparaging view.

I use the term with these words: Ideal (for women), view (at women).

**Significant:** Something that is important in the context.

I use the term with this word: Factor.

**Strict:** Clear and transparent rules that are hard to break.

I use the term with these words: Ideals (regarding women), Rastafarian groups, values (regarding women) and roles (for men and women).

**Traditional:** A conservative view with a due way back in time which is entrained through generations.

I use the term with these words: Specializations (within the Rasta group), values (regarding women), Rastafarian groups, view (at women), and Rastafarians ideals (regarding women).

## 4 Method and material

### 4.1 Approach

I chose to investigate the social work within the Rastafarian group from an individual perspective (from a micro level) and I used an inductive method. But I also used a qualitative research. Therefore, I focused on semi structured interviews with people and observed people and organizations to get more information about the subject, of course combined with literature sources. In the book *Kvalitativ intervju* (2004) Anne Ryen describes the qualitative method as a kind of research which makes it easier to get deeper into a subject, often at a more personal level. Common approaches of the qualitative method are for example analysis of texts and documentation, different kinds of interviews and use of visual media. Ryen makes clear that one thing that is very characterizing within the qualitative method is that the way to get the material is very free, there isn't any standard practice among qualitative researches (2004). For more information on the qualitative method, I refer to *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder* (Bryman, 2011) part three and chapter seventeen and to *Kvalitativ intervju* (2004), written by Anne Ryen.

I chose to use the qualitative method instead of a quantitative research because I thought that it's better for a relatively small essay like this. I did not have time or resources to do a broad research which I think I would have to do to make a quantitative research make sense. I was also more interested in seeing the Social work within the Rastafarian group from an individual perspective which made me believe that a qualitative research would be preferable. As mentioned before I focused on the values in social work within the Rasta group, which probably also made interviews and observations the most appropriate method.

The approach used for my research is similar to the steps Alan Bryman describes for a qualitative research in his book *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder* (2011, PP. 345-347). The first step is, according to Bryman, to choose general research questions for the essay. This was one of the first things I did but, of course, I had to overlook and correct them during my work. According to the questions, I looked for organizations within the social work for women and for Rastafarian social workers to interview and observe in Jamaica.

Luckily I've got my contact person Mrs. Williams in Jamaica who took me to both Woman's Inc (which is an organization for women), to Rasta Indigenous village (a village where only Rastas work) and to the school in Montego Bay. This helped me to get in touch with three interviewees with a great experience of both social work and Rastafarian values, who I'm following in my essay.

When I got some information I analyzed and interpreted it, after which I collected more data. At the same time I applied Erving Goffman's "Theatrical metaphor" to the analyzed data to get a deeper understanding and a further perspective at the data. I also had to specify my research questions at this stage. Finally, I focused on writing the rapport based on the collected information and literature and finished the work with my own conclusions in a discussion. All the work, except from the research I did before I left Sweden, took place in Jamaica.

## **4.2 Collection of data**

During my collection of data, I used partly elements of the ethnographic method like interviews and participating observations. Due to ethical reasons, I chose to use the elements belonging to an "open ethnographic research role", like observations with me like a "participant as observer". Alan Bryman describes the research role "participant as observer" like mainly observing participant in interaction with different kinds of people according to the research subject. In this role is it important that the participants in the social environment are aware of the researcher's status as a researcher (Bryman 2011. PP. 388-392).

According to the ethnographic method, I also photographed the environments where the people participating in my research spend their everyday life. Of course, I always documented only to the extent I was allowed to from the persons involved. The purpose with these photos was to help me get a deeper understanding for the research participant's daily life. For example, I visited the village "Rasta Indigenous Village" where Ms. Young works and the school where Ms. Lennon often do her work. In addition, I observed Rastafarians who were teaching and visited Woman's Inc, which is an organization for women. I also lived with a Rastafarian family for three weeks. This gave me a broader picture of social work in Jamaica as well as a greater understanding of the Rasta group.

However, I have chosen to exclude everything that does not concern my three interviewees in the paper.

The most important part of my research consisted of interviews with three persons with experience of social work done by Rastafarians. Since my aim was to investigate the social work at a micro level I chose to follow few people during my stay in Jamaica. The interviews were semi-structured, which means that the researcher has a list over themes that should be addressed during the interview, at the same time as the interviewed person has the chance to formulate the answers in his/her own way. This provides a flexible interview process while the topic is in focus (Bryman, 2011).

To get a deeper understanding for the interviewed persons I had about three 30-60 minutes long interviews with each of them. In the first interview, I asked basic questions about their connection to the Rasta group and to social work (for details, see the attached interview form). The purpose with this interview was to identify interesting angles that were within my research area. In the second interview we went deeper into the details and opinions on the subject, which led to a third and deeper and more private interview.

In summary I have done nine interviews which I use in the paper. All the interviews are typed to increase the reliability of the material. Of course, I have had permission from the interviewees to record the conversations. Further, I've transcribed and coded the material in different themes to understand it better and to find interesting angles in the interviews. The angles from the first two interviews with each person I brought with me to the last conversation to investigate deeper.

### **4.3 Selection of interviewees**

The type of selection I used to choose people for my research is called *theoretically selection*, and is one of the targeted types of selections. Theoretically selections is a common type of selection within the ethnographic research method and means briefly that the survey participants are selected in a strategic way so that they are relevant to the research questions that have been formulated

(Bryman, 2011). The theoretical sample is usually a continuous process and is therefore not dependent on a special occasion. One other thing, which is characteristic for the theoretical sample and for many types of selections within the ethnographic method, is that not only human beings are selected. Also happenings, situations and places are selected according to the topic of the research (ibid).

I chose to have a broad picture of what can be included in the concept of social work. Therefore, I included both paid and volunteering work and governmental and nongovernmental organizations in my research. The main point I assumed for my definition of social work was that the work had a purpose to improve other people's lives. Since I wanted to get a diverse as possible picture of the Rasta group's values regarding women, I also tried to get interviewees who could provide different perspectives at the Rasta group and who had experience of social work at "various levels". I also chose to use people from both sexes and people who belongs to the Rasta group and one who doesn't.

As mentioned I followed three persons with a great experience of both social work and Rastafarian values in around three interviews each. These persons are, due to ethical reasons, not called by their own names in the essay. Instead, I've chosen to name them to Ms. Young, Mr. Johnson and Ms. Lennon:

**Ms. Young** is a 61 years old Rastafarian woman who is working in a Rasta village in Montego Bay, Jamaica, called Rasta Indigenous Village. She has called herself a Rasta for seven years now and has belonged to the village for four years. Today, her daily work in the village includes doing massage therapy and Reflexology (a kind of massage through feet's). In addition, she interacts with and educates people coming to the village about her Rasta lifestyle in purpose to teach people about her own values as a Rasta woman. I chose to follow Ms. Young because of her good experience of Rasta values as a women belonging to the group. The fact that she has seen the Rasta group both from a perspective as a Rasta and without being it, made an interesting comparison possible. In addition, she has seen a lot of social work being done by Rastafarians which gave me a good insight in what social work within the group can look like.

**Mr. Johnson** is a 36 years old Rastafarian man who is doing a lot of social work which includes working as a personal assistant and working for the human right organization “Stand up for Jamaica”. Mr. Johnson has been a social worker for about seven years and is today, among other things, doing violence prevention workshops, human rights training for new police recruits, working with gays, lesbians, persons living with HIV, persons with disabilities, prisoners, adolescents etc. He used to work for Amnesty as a volunteer for two years but then his boss, who is the local coordinator for Amnesty, put together a human rights organization called “Stand Up for Jamaica” of which Mr. Johnson is a director today. I chose to follow Mr. Johnson because of his broad comprehension of social work and long experience of being a Rastafarian. At the same time I wanted a male’s perspective on the values of the Rasta Group.

**Ms. Lennon** is a woman in her early 30ths, working as a guidance counselor for the government in Jamaica. She used to work with questions regarding HIV and Aids for *Jamaican aids support* for two years. Her experience of values within the Rasta community is mainly through social interaction with Rastafarians in different situations as working with them, having Rasta friends and Rastafarians as clients. My chose to follow Ms. Lennon in the investigation was mainly because of her great experience of social work at relatively high level, while she has a broad view on values regarding women within the Rasta group, both from a personal and professional perspective. Furthermore, the fact that she does not belong to the Rasta group, gave another interesting perspective on how Rastafarians effects by the groups’ values within their social work.

#### **4.4 Validity and reliability**

Validity means that the survey measures what it intends to measure (Bryman, 2011). In qualitative studies, this often means that the study answers the purpose and the questions the researcher assumes. Questions you can ask yourself when it comes to the validity of the study include: How likely/probable are the results? And: Can the results be applied in other contexts? (Bryman, 2011). Since my purpose was to examine what social work looks like within the Rastafarian community, it was important that my investigation could provide answers to that.

However, it is important to clarify that the results in my study are applicable to the interview persons I chose to follow and not in a credible manner can represent Rasta group as a whole. Of course, the results depend on many aspects as my prior understanding, the situation itself, the environment around etc. Therefore, the results might be difficult to apply in different contexts.

To get as high credibility as possible, I selected locations for interviews and observations in the study persons living. This also helped me to see better out of their perspective although I obviously, nevertheless, saw the people and environments from my pre-understanding. However, to increase the quality of my material I chose to tape all the interviews and right after them transcribe and encode them, this in purpose to remember as much as possible of the interviewees' story before it was reflected of my own. I also tried to be open with my approach in order to let the readers themselves judge the credibility of the material.

Reliability means that it is possible to get similar results with the same measurement at another time. However, this is often difficult to live up to within qualitative researches, where the surveys to a large extent are subjective minted and depend on the context. Because a qualitative research is unstructured and often depends on the researcher's ingenuity, it is rarely possible to make a replication of a particular investigation (Bryman, 2011). Therefore, it is not as much emphasis on reliability within the qualitative research tradition, instead the researcher is seen instead as the most important tool during the data collection (ibid). Anyway, I tried to follow and report my various stages of the investigation, which increases the possibility remake it (although it is very likely that other survey people and another time would produce different results).

#### **4.5 Relevance of the subject**

I didn't find any literature about what the social work within the Rastafarian group look like, especially not with focus on values regarding women, which made the subject even more interesting and important to expose. The fact that very little attention has been paid to the situation of women within the Rastafarian community (Barnet, 2012) made the subject worth paying attention to and investigate deeper.



Meanwhile the Rastafarian group is such a large part of the population that it's likely to have a great influence on people living in Jamaica and on the standards and behaviors that exists. I think it was good that I, a person from outside the country with a good image of the Rastafarian group but with a negative attitude to discrimination of women, come highlighting culture standards. Maybe I was more objective and critical than I would have been as a native. I also think that it's good to be able to spread a more diverse image of the Rastafarian group than the preconceived picture many people outside the culture have today.

#### **4.6 Ethical dilemmas**

One ethical dilemma during the research was the sensitive questions I had to ask people when I searched for material about values regarding women. Where is the line between privacy and the need of information for my essay? I was aware of that discrimination of women might be a sensitive subject for many people which made it even more important to respect people's integrity. Therefore, I used anonymous sources for the interviewees who participated in the essay. This sensitivity also made it even more important to be aware of the requirement about consent (the second principle) that the Research Ethics Council has produced (<http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR>, 2012). The consent principle is briefly about that the researcher must have the consent of the people involved in the investigation throughout the investigation. At the same time, it was very important to keep the material away from unauthorized, which the third principle, the "Confidentiality obligation", advocates (<http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR>, 2012). Finally, a requirement is that the material only will be used for the intended paper, which is the fourth of the principles, called "The utilization requirement" (<http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR>, 2012).

Another ethical dilemma was that it could be perceived as if I was questioning the interview person's culture when I, as a foreigner, asked personal questions about their traditions, values and faith. The view which the literature gives at Rasta group values as very patriarchal felt very sensitive to highlight. It often felt like I got caught between my, based on the literature, partially questioning research questions and the sympathy and respect I wanted to give my interviewees. It could

often be perceived as I personally stood for the literature's assertions and statements which in itself became an ethical dilemma when I didn't have the opportunity to explain my own opinions and values.

It is also possible that I did not understand the interviewees as good as I could have done if I had got more time to familiarize myself with the culture. This in turn probably made me very marked of my background about the Rasta group and of my carried values. Tim May describes in his book *Samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* (2001) that the researchers own values should be considered during the research. We are, according to May, always effected of our subjective and individual view at the world, which makes it impossible to be objective in a research. Even if we don't can change this subjective view, is it important to be aware of things that effects us in the conduct of research, says May (2001, P. 67-78).

Also Patrik Asberg discusses about the ethic in a research in his book *Etnografiska metoder* (2011). Asberg describes that it is important to distinguish between how it really is and how it should be in a research and says, just like May (2001), that it can be difficult not to mix the own values in the survey. The science has a limit to the extent; it is unable to provide us with answers about how to live our lives (Asberg, 2011. P. 68-69). This was important for me to remember during the research. The main purpose of this paper was, after all, to explain or understand a phenomenon in society, not to make a difference in the community.

## **5 Results**

In this chapter will I present the results I received through interviews with my three interviewees; Ms. Young, Mr. Johnson and Ms. Lennon. This based on my purpose which is to investigate how Rastafarian social workers, in their professional role, relate to the values which exist regarding women within the Rastafarian community. I will then use the results in a discussion in chapter 6.

## **5.1 Ms. Young**

*Ms. Young is a Rastafarian woman who represents the village “Rastafari Indigenous Village” in which different kinds of social work is carried out by Rastafarians.*

### **5.1.1 Description of Ms. Young**

Rastafari Indigenous Village is a working village for Rastafarians where people from other parts of community can come and see how one of the Rasta groups is living. The Rastafarians in the village also lives there sometimes but they all have their own family homes. They describe the village themselves like this:

It is a “working village” - in that, all the Villagers do not all live at the location but work together to showcase the philosophy, movement, and lifestyle-concept of their lives. We are situated in a garden of mostly endemic flora, fauna and handmade art & craft of exceptional quality. The Rastafari are concerned with: Self sustainable livelihoods, cultural, social, agricultural and economic development for community and nation building. Education for life skills, skill development and the protection of the biodiversity of the island (<http://www.rastavillage.com/>, 2012-11-17).

Four years ago, the Rasta group in Rastafari Indigenous Village asked Ms. Young to belong to them and since then she has worked there. Today, her daily work in the village includes doing massage therapy and Reflexology (a kind of massage through feet’s). In addition, she interacts with and educates people about her Rasta lifestyle in purpose to teach people about her own values as a Rasta woman in the village but also in community. Sometimes, the Rastafarians in the village for example invite children in school to the village and other times they are visiting the schools. This, among other, in purpose to tell the children about their Rasta values such as being tolerant and loving each other. “It is different in the school” Ms. Young describes and explains further that children often have a harder world outside the Rasta village. The most important thing they teach the kids is however to love themselves and each other. Some of the children do also have a low self-esteem, she says. When that is the case, they talk with them.

Another important part of the work in the village includes caring for elderly people in community, she says, and explains that care of the elderly is an

important part of Rasta's values. The work includes, among other, listening and giving advice to the olds and sometimes they also prepare food for them. All this work is done by both men and women, says Ms. Young: "We all do the same thing, we all share". However, the villagers all have their own skills too she explains, even though an important part of the work is helping each other.

Ms. Young herself is a 61 year old woman who has called herself a Rasta for seven years, but she has known a lot about the group for a much longer time. It all started when Ms. Young saw how Rasta lived during her teenage years. She became interested and learned a lot about them. Neither her mother nor father belonged to the Rastafarian group and nor do her "living partner" and three children belong to the Rasta group either. She explains, however, that she has a sister who is a Rasta and that she believes that her life partner is "a Rasta in his mind".

Despite Ms. Young began to call herself a Rasta 7 years ago, she wanted to do it a long time before that. But, because of the hotel she worked at this the time who had not accepted it, she couldn't do it until then. Ms. Young explains further that she has never regretted that choice which has made her stronger: "I have been spiritually stronger. I think I deal with things in a different way, with more patience, faith and I don't fear for anything. I've got more peace in me". She also describes herself as more "outgoing" today than before and gives an example: "If I see anything which can change to the better, I would go. If I, for example, am walking on a street and sees children doing something wrong, I will tell them. I'm more willing to share myself". Further, the biggest difference Ms. Young feels between the Rasta group she belongs to and the rest of the Jamaican society is that the group is less selfless and more like a cooperative working together.

### **5.1.2 Rastafarian values**

Ms. Young says that the essential characteristics for Rasta group's values are "love, peace and working together" (cooperation, she clarifies). She also believes that there are clear ideals against violence within the group. Otherwise it is, she says, more of an attitude in life. "If we see something, we'll go there".

Rastafarians are generally very selfless and they learn to accept people as they are,

she explains. Furthermore, she says that what she likes most about the group is the brother-and sisterhood, and the spiritual experience. In addition, she describes how people within the Rasta group look up to older people, both men and women, and how they often take good care of their children. Some in her group are, for example, writing poems for children in order to teach them how to love and take care of themselves.

### **5.1.3 Values regarding women within the group**

In Ms. Young's group there is no discrimination of women, she says. Women and men have the same value, stick together and protect each other while both sexes is seen as independent and are taking decisions in the same extent. However, there is a slight difference in roles, says Ms. Young: "women have their mother role and the men are protective. They might complement each other, but no one is better than another".

Although Ms. Young's group describes as very equal between the sexes, she tells that there are groups where the woman has a lower position than men. This show most often within very traditional or religious Rasta groups says Ms. Young, and explains further that it also is more common to see the woman as a weaker part of the relationship within these groups. "There are many different kinds of Rastas and in some aspects they are different. Bobo Shantie is for example stricter". Furthermore, she describes how many of these stricter groups put women in a separated way when they have their period because of the Bible where they are seen as unclean. Despite this inequality, Ms. Young does not think that the view at women in these groups has any effect on the rest of the Jamaican community: "It don't shows in community, It goes at their grows".

Ms. Young is, however, clear to point out that she has not seen any of this inequality in her group, in which she feel protected and treated "like a queen". She thinks that the patriarchal image which the literature gives of Rastafarians mainly is because there are more Rasta men than there are Rasta women: "It's because more men are Rastas so it looks more male dominated, but it's not!" Most of the Rasta men cook, she continues, and some Rasta men also grow their children themselves.

#### **5.1.4 Rasta group values within social work**

According to Ms. Young, values from the Rasta group shows within the social work in several ways. One of the places where this can be seen clearly is in the work for the elderly people and for children, who we according to Ms. Young's group's values should protect. Therefore, her work in the schools includes teaching children about what love, peace and equality is about. In addition, she talks a lot to the kids about the importance of having respect for each other. "We are all equal and we are all humans", says Ms. Young, which for her is important to remind the students about. Not at least when it comes to men and women.

"We kind of loose that respect in the Western community", she continues.

"Before, four generations lived in the same house and learned from each other but now we are losing that. People seem to lose their world philosophy. We need to have money, but money can't buy life. All is going into the western thing".

Furthermore, she believes that this partly is due to families: "Peace starts at home and it's going to the community, to the country and to the world. There are problems in many families". This makes it even more important to talk to the children while they are young, she says.

What motivates the Rasta group in the social work according to Ms. Young, includes a sense of responsibility and caring for others, and the social workers personality itself. She means that there is something special in the Rasta group that can be used to their advantage in the social work: "Because of the love Rastas have, they effect the people they deal with". Ms. Young also believes that it is possible for Rastafarians to see people's needs while "our entire worldview allows us to help more,".

Also when it comes to values regarding women, Ms. Young believes that the approach within the Rasta Group is visible in social work and that the attitude to other people shines through: "They are equal so we treat people as equals".

Furthermore, she wants everyone to have an equal chance in life, males as females. We are all people and complements each other, she says, but "no one is better than another one."

## **5.2 Mr. Johnson**

*Mr. Johnson is a 36 years old Rastafarian man who is doing a lot of social work which, among other, include working as a personal assistant and working for the human right organization Stand up for Jamaica.*

### **5.2.1 Description of Mr. Johnson**

Mr. Johnson has been a social worker for around seven years and is today, among other things, doing violence prevention workshops, human rights training for new police recruits, working with gays, lesbians, persons living with HIV, persons with disabilities, prisoners, gang members, children, women and adolescents for the organization Stand up for Jamaica. In addition, he is working for the Italian consulate with administration. Earlier, he worked for Amnesty as a volunteer for two years but then his boss, who is the local coordinator for Amnesty, put together a human rights organization called “Stand Up for Jamaica” of which Mr. Johnson is a board member of today.

Mr. Johnson has called himself a Rasta since he was 14 years old although none of his family members have ever been a Rasta. He describes the reason to his faith like this: “It is about my personal outlook. A way to understand life. It happened when I got shot; I tried to find a way to move forward”. Mr. Johnson has never belonged to any special “Rasta group” and describes it more like a way of life: “One does not become a Rasta, an individual grows and mature into Rasta as it is a consciousness of living in love! Yes I would have been a different person, a gangster. This is because I grow up in a tough inner-city community where one has to be aggressive in order to survive”. Today, being a Rasta makes him even more loving, caring and understanding, he says. “A Rasta man is a lover, and that is what Rasta is all about!”

### **5.2.2 Values regarding women within the community**

According to Mr. Johnson the main point for Rastafarians is to treat all people with love and respect. How that shows in practice differ however between Rasta groups, he continues. Some groups, such as the "Twelve Tribe", allow women to be independent and follow their dreams while other more traditional groups can

be limiting for women, says Mr. Johnson and gives an example that: “In the Bobo Shanti movement women are not allowed to wear pants. In the more liberal movement of 12 tribes of Israel women are permitted to wear pants. In fact, they do not need permission to do so”. Further, he explains that these stricter groups often are based on the Bible, where the woman should be led by men. There are groups, says Mr. Johnson, which does not allow women to have the same value as men. Despite this, he believes that the patriarchal picture which parts of the literature gives of Rastafarians is mainly due to the view among those Rastafarian groups who are following the bible:

“It is wrong as I am a firm believer in gender equality; however, one has to take into consideration that there are strengths and weaknesses in being a woman or a man. It is because of the bible - it portrays man as the head and woman as the subject”.

Mr. Johnson himself doesn't belong to any particular group, but personally he thinks that women and men should share the work at home and be seen as two equal human beings in a relationship: “Both are equal and should share the responsibilities that come with a union - social, intimate, financial, etcetera”. He also explains that women often are associated to the family within the Rastafarian group and points out that she, in his opinion, should be free: “A woman has the right to use contraceptives and family planning. She is an individual and not a property” he says, and explains that the view of women as free individuals is common among Rastafarian men.

Furthermore, Mr. Johnson believes that women, as well as men, should be able to do what they want with their lives. "I'm a liberal person when it comes to women's ways of living their own lives" he says. Mr. Johnson is clear to point out that he only represents his own personal belief: "My personal conviction is to treat each and everyone with respect. But that is just my personal opinion, I do not speak for any other Rastas ". Mr. Johnson goes on to describe how he often calls women "queens" or "princesses", especially his own four sisters who he also calls “his four angels”.



### **5.1.3 Rasta community values within Rastafarians social work**

Furthermore, Mr. Johnson do not hesitate that his personal beliefs effect him in social work:

I think my personal belief affects me in my job. Most of the Rastafari men treat women according to the Bible but through my belief, I treat everyone as a human being in my social work. I do not treat women as a sin, I treat them compared to their needs and I treat them with respect.

Mr. Johnson also explains that his "stamp" as a Rasta man can be an advantage in his social work when it comes to other people's attitude towards him: "A lot of people look up to Rastafarians and we are respected". This in turn, helps him win trust of people he says: "I think my faith is an advantage for me in my social work. I do counseling with young girls who have been sexual abused. They see a person they can relate to. It's about trust building". However, being a Rastafarian can also can be a disadvantage within social work, says Mr. Johnson: "The disadvantages can be that clients may think that you will stigmatize and discriminate against them".

Furthermore, Mr. Johnson thinks that the Rasta faith has made him more loving, understanding and caring at the same as being a Rastafarian "fosters trust, respect, and creative thinking" in his social work. He describes that Rasta for him is a lot about protection and caring for others, which in turn reflects in his work for women: "It helps me to respect women more. It will only impact on me to be more committed and respectful in my work. ...because it is someone I treat with respect and care for. That is what also social work is about".

## **5.3 Ms. Lennon**

*Ms. Lennon is a women working as a guidance counselor for the government in Jamaica and has experience of Rasta values at different levels within the social work.*

### **5.3.1 Description of Ms. Lennon**

Ms. Lennon is a woman in her early 30's who is working as a guidance counselor for the government in Jamaica. She used to work with questions regarding HIV

and Aids for *Jamaican aids support* for two years. Her experience of values within the Rasta group is mainly through social interaction with Rastafarians in different situations as working with them, having Rasta friends and having Rastafarians as clients.

Ms. Lennon has worked as a Guidance Counselor for the government in Jamaica for approximately four years. In her work she, among other things, is having Art therapy with 6-12 year old children, has counseling sessions with parents and students, consultations with parents and teachers, guidance with classes and is doing special programs for schools to help the students practice their personal social development. From 2006 to 2008, Ms. Lennon also worked for the organization *Jamaican aids support* with questions around HIV and Aids. The work mainly included public education about HIV and Aids awareness and prevention care and treatment. In addition, Ms. Lennon was responsible for the press releases for the organization in the West region of Jamaica.

### **5.3.2 Values regarding women within the Rasta group**

According Ms. Lennon, Rastafarians in general have a strong belief in their faith and they are holding on to a strong culture. However, she means that the Rastafarian faith has changed:

“The Rastafarian faith has changed. I can’t really say if it has changed a lot but people are now adapting to things that is happening in their own dimmer. There are still strong in their faith but I have seen many changes in what you are accustomed to within the Rastafari. Not that they have followed the community but you find out that they may be less traditional in some groups, because the Rastafarian faith is so wide that there is one group believes in one thing and another group who doesn’t believe in that.

This development in turn, has changed the view at Rastafarians in the Jamaican community says Ms. Lennon, and explains that there was a discrimination of Rastafarians before: “There was a time when they didn’t get jobs because of their faith, because people didn’t think they looked proper enough. Today most Rastafarians have changed in the way they dress and they have adopted the culture of the rest of society”. This in turn, effects the way some Rastafarians treat

their women, she says. For example, more Rastafarian women go to university today and become chiefs and managers. Ms. Lennon explains further that this change might have been effected by the new view in Jamaica in general: “There is equality to a great extent now. I might be wrong but I think there is more freedom of choice, more freedom of expression and freedom of speak today which leads to that people are more willing to change or adopt new cultures”. In addition, this change also has made women within the Rastafarian group more empowered she says.

Furthermore, Ms. Lennon believes that the view at women to a large extent is due to a cycle of culture: “This is how my mum did or how my grandmother did”. But it’s also due to family reasons, Ms. Lennon explains further: “It is definitely about what kind of parenting there is in a culture. If parents don’t push girls to be what they want to be, they won’t reach it”. This in turn, leads to that some Rastafarian women know what they want out of their life and go for it while some push themselves to achieve what is expected of them, says Ms. Lennon.

### **5.3.3 Expectations on social workers**

Despite the fact that inequality exists among some Rastafarians, Ms. Lennon does not see any disadvantages with the Rasta faith within social work: “I don’t think that the Rastafarian faith is a disadvantage in the social work. Because the Rastafarian faith, as I know it, believes in equality and that is basically what human rights acts speak to, equality among humans”. Further, Ms. Lennon don’t see any difference in the way Rastafarians are working according to their values compared to how social workers in general do their job in the Jamaica:

Anyone who is qualified for it can do social work. We all try to treat people equal. In social work you find that there are sets of how you treat people as a social worker. It’s more about how you are as a social worker then about a culture. When you work in social work there are always expectations on you. You are for example expected to apply to the child’s right, expected to treat people with fairness, expected to do follow ups if necessary, expected to help people find their true potential and expected to remain confidential.

Of course all these expectations also shows in social work with women, says Ms. Lennon. “As a social worker you are expected to be neutral and see both sides when it comes to men and women” she explains, and clarifies that this goes for all kinds of social workers, being a Rastafarian or not.

Furthermore, everything is getting more international now she explains, which makes it even more important not to discriminate. Ms. Lennon doesn't see the patriarchal view which the literature often gives of Rastafarians values as typical for the Rasta group: “You have some men that believes that a woman's place is at home. A woman should not be working, should not have a career”. But that doesn't have to be a Rasta she says, it's more about the wider society in general. Generally, Ms. Lennon doesn't think that the Rasta groups' values regarding women effect Rastafarian social workers at all in their social work. “It's more about the job description than of what a Rastafarian has to do. If a Rastafarian is qualified, he or she will do the job”, she says and means that we all, as human beings and not just Rastafarians, have to be humanitarians.

## **6 Discussion**

### **6.1 Discussion based on Goffman's Theater metaphor**

#### **6.1.1 Traditional influences in values and ideals regarding women**

A common point I found among the three interviewees was the impact the tradition seems to have on values and ideals that are within the Rasta group. Both Ms. Young, Mr. Johnson and Ms. Lennon said that there are more traditional specializations within the Rasta group where the ideals and values around women are very strict, while Ms. Lennon said that the traditional values play a major role in gender equality. Both Ms. Young and Mr. Johnson described the religion, based on the Bible, as a significant factor for these traditional ideals.

According to **Ms. Young** there are groups where the woman has a lower position than men which most often shows within very religious Rasta groups. As an example, she explained that Bobo Shantie, which is often described as a more religious orientation among Rastafarians, is one of the stricter Rasta groups:

“There are many different kinds of Rastas and in some aspects they are different. Bobo Shantie is for example more strict”.

I find it likely that Rastafarian groups which use the Bible as guidance are stricter when it comes to values and ideals regarding women than Rastafarian groups which don't count themselves as religious are. At the same time, another explanation might be that Ms. Young and the women in her group are some of the Rastafarian women who haven't accepted these strict roles and ideals. Ms. Young presented herself and the equality between the sexes in her group as the norm, which simply could be explained by the fact that this actually might be her experience of the Rasta group. But it is in my opinion also possible that she was trying to portray herself and the group in an idealized way. According to Goffman people often try to appear as a little better than they really are based on the expectations from the environment (for further explanation, see chapter 3.2, P. 15). Perhaps Ms. Young and her Rastafarian group have equality as a common ideal, which in turn might effected the way Ms. Young emphasized the group, according to Goffman's metaphor (1959).

**Mr. Johnson** also meant that there are more traditional Rasta groups where men treat women as they are in a lower position than themselves. As an example for this inequality he took the group Bobo Shanti: “Example, in the Bobo Shanti movement women are not allowed to wear pants. In the more liberal movement of 12 tribes of Israel women are permitted to wear pants. In fact, they do not need permission to do so”. To refer back to Goffman (1959) who describes so-called *teams* (see chapter 3, PP. 14-16), the Rasta group could be explained as a team, which in turn could explain the pressure the group puts on Mr. Johnson to behave in a certain way according to the team's direct and indirect rules. But it could also be a possible explanation to why discriminating ideals and values regarding women better preserves within more traditional Rasta groups. Maybe there are more formal and informal rules within these groups than in other Rastafarian orientations, which help keeping these stricter ideals around women? If that's the case, it could make it harder for women to break free from the expectations from their groups within more traditional Rastafarian orientations.

According to me, it might also explain the significant part the religion seems to have within these groups. Perhaps these clear rules for how a women should be seen which defines within the Bible is a reason to why more traditional groups with religious elements can preserve their strict values regarding women. When there are common points for how members of a team should behave, the team's credibility and consistency increases, says Goffman (1959).

**Ms. Lennon** said that inequality among genders to a large extent is due to family reasons: “For some it’s a cycle of culture: this is how my mum did or how my grandmother did...It is definitely about what kind of parenting there is in a culture. If parents don’t push girls to be what they want to be, they won’t reach it”. This indicates in my opinion a different type of conventional impact, which in turn might preserve traditionally, rooted patterns for women within some Rastafarian groups. According to Ms. Lennon, girls thus are socialized in a given direction from the beginning. Also Goffman (1959) describes this socialization and means that we from the start socializes into the community to fit the environment. I find it possible that men and women within more traditional Rastafarian groups to a greater extent socializes to fit in a different role with different values and ideals than men and women in less traditional Rasta groups does.

### **6.1.2 Traditional ideals within the Rastafarian Community are not reflected in the social work**

Although Ms. Young, Mr. Johnson and Ms. Lennon said that there is a strong link between traditional Rasta Groups and strict ideals for women, neither one of them pronounced these values and ideals as disadvantages within Rastafarians social work. All three means that the traditional ideals don’t show at all among Rastafarian social workers.

Both **Ms. Young** and **Mr. Johnson** described themselves as very equal Rastafarians when it comes to men and women and meant that their Rastafarian values mainly are an advantage for them within their social work. Despite this, they explained clearly that there are more traditional Rastafarian groups where discrimination of women occurs, while none of them expressed any problem with

this traditional view at women within their social work. Ms. Young explained the reason to that like this: “It doesn’t show in community, It goes at their grows”, and meant that traditional Rastafarian groups often keep their values and ideals regarding women for themselves.

Also **Ms. Lennon** meant that inequality exists among some Rastafarians while she explained that she doesn’t see any disadvantage with Rastafarian values within the social work: “I don’t think that the Rastafarian belief is a disadvantage in social work. Because the Rastafarian faith, as I know it, believes in equality and that is basically what human rights acts speak for, equality among humans”. Ms. Lennon also described that equality among social workers is more due to the personality of the individual and to the expectations of the community:

“Anyone who is qualified for it can do social work. We all try to treat people equal. In social work you find that there are sets of how you treat people as a social worker. It’s more about how you are as a social worker then about a culture. When you work in social work there are always expectations on you. You are for example expected to apply to the child’s right, expected to treat people with fairness, expected to do follow ups if necessary, expected to help people find their true potential and expected to remain confidential”.

There are also expectations of you as a social worker to treat men and women equally, continues Ms. Lennon: “As a social worker you are expected to be neutral and see both sides when it comes to men and women”. Perhaps these expectations from society can explain why discriminating ideals regarding women which exist in the Rasta group don’t seem to show within the social work.

According to Goffman’s Theater metaphor (1959), the Rastafarian group could be explained as one team with formal and informal rules and expectations on its members, while social workers could be explained as another team (for an explanation of the concept “team”, see chapter 3, PP. 14-16). These teams could be described as “*Rasta community team*” and “*Social worker (professional) team*”. For traditional Rastafarians who are social workers, this could lead to a clash between two teams, which in turn could lead to a clash between different expectations from these teams: expectations to treat women and men equal as a

social worker and expectations to priority men before women according to the Rastafarian groups' values. I find it possible that these expectations and formal and informal rules that are on the individual as a social worker is stronger than they are at the individual as a Rastafarians, which leads to that Rastafarian social workers choosing to adopt norms and ideals from society in front of the values that exist within the Rastafarian group.

Furthermore, the traditional Rastafarians within the "Rastafarian community team" could be seen as represents for traditional and unequal values regarding women (which leads to a social problem), while the "Social worker team" represent modern and equal values. This in turn makes in my opinion the social work become a normalizing project where the Rastafarian social workers seem to introduce values and ideals from the "Social worker team" to the "Rastafarian community team" in purpose to make the group more equal.

In addition, there might be expectations on the "Social worker team" from society which are stronger than the society's expectations on the "Rasta community team". Ms. Lennon described the development in the Jamaican society like this: "There is equality to a great extent now. I might be wrong but I think there is more freedom of choice, more freedom of expression and freedom of speak today which leads to that people are more willing to change or adopt new cultures". According to me, it is possible that this view effects the expectations on social workers to treat people equal, which in turn makes it even more difficult not to adopt this view as a social worker.

Goffman (1959) describes how people present themselves according to the expectations from society (see chapter 3, PP. 14-16) and means that all these expectations on social workers, both from parts of community and from other members in the "Social worker team" might give an explanation to why the inequality which exists among some Rastafarians doesn't seem to show within the social work. At the same time as these ideals and values within the Rastafarian group seem to be more multifaceted. As Goffman (1959) describes it, it is hard to keep a team together without common formal and informal rules. The rules among the social workers seem to be stronger and more united than the rules within the Rastafarian group are which, according to Goffmans metaphor, could



explain why the traditional Rastafarian values don't shine through in the social work. Further, it might be a possible explanation to why Rastafarian social workers choose to adopt values from the "Social worker team" instead of the traditional values which exist within the "Rastafarian community team".

Goffman explains that participating in many teams at the same time doesn't necessarily have to become a problem as long as we can adapt to the situation. As members of teams, we are often expected to play down or conceal facts in purpose to maintain the definition of the situation, according to Goffman (1959). Perhaps the Rastafarian social workers actually manage to keep a credible facade as participants of both the "Social worker team" and in the "Rastafarian community team". But it is also very likely that the image of the social worker as Rastafarians is getting weaker through their strong advocacy for "the social worker team's" values.

In summary, my results can be explained by two different teams, according to Goffman's theater metaphor: the "Social worker team" and the "Rasta community team". According to these teams, the three interviewees can be described as proponents for the "Social worker team's" modern and equal values which are trying to introduce in the "Rasta community team". This in turn results according to me in a normalizing project where the social worker try to shape the Rastafarian groups' traditional values and ideals (which can be seen as a social problem) in a more equal direction.

Goffman's metaphor may thus illustrate a tension between two teams with different values and ideals. This in turn results in that the "Rastafarian community team" set their traditional and unequal values aside and instead adopts modern and equal values from the "Social worker team", which finally gives a possible explanation to why social workers don't see discriminating ideals regarding women in their work within the Rastafarian community.

## **6.2 Rastafarian social workers' approach to the Rastafarian Community's values regarding women**

All the three study subjects responded predominantly positive about the Rasta group's values regarding women and their influence in social work. Despite this, none of the study subjects said that there are any disadvantages with the Rastafarian groups' values and ideals regarding women within their social work. Although Goffman's metaphor (1959) gives a possible explanation to this, it can be considered in several ways. When it comes to the social workers who are Rastafarians, is it possible that they are trying to protect the group from me as an outsider, while it is possible that it was difficult to look objectively at their own ideals and values.

Further, a possible explanation in my opinion is that the literature has been excessively strong in its reflection of the Rasta group as patriarchal. Perhaps it assumes much more traditional and religious ideals than many Rastafarians currently apply in reality. Especially Ms. Lennon meant that the Rastafarian group is under a constant development and has changed a lot over the last few years, which very likely could effect their perception of women in the group. It is in my opinion possible that the literature is not up to date according to this development, or that the authors have assumed more traditional/religious Rastafarians as representatives for the Rastafarian groups' values and ideals than the ones I have used in my research.

### **6.2.1 Rastafarian social workers as "agents of change"**

To refer back Goffman's metaphor (1959), where social workers and Rastafarians could be resembled as two teams, I believe that these ideals could lead to a tension between the "Rasta community team" and the "social worker team". This may result in that the Rastafarian social workers seem to become "agents of change" in purpose to make the "Rasta community team" adopt modern ideals and values regarding women from the "social worker team". Thus social work could in my opinion be explained as a normalizing project, not only of clients but also of social workers in order to learn Rastafarians how to treat all people equal on the basis of the "social worker team's" ideals.

One thing I find interesting is that the “Rasta community team” seems to adopt values and ideals from the “social worker team” values and not the opposite. Perhaps it’s due to the fact that there might be an older tradition in social work with clear guidelines and goals which are difficult to break. Maybe the size of the group is of importance, where the number of social workers is likely to be bigger than the Rastafarians are. At the same time, I find it possible that social work to a large extent reflects the values of society, which in turn could lead to greater pressure on members of the “social worker team” than on the members of the “Rasta community team” to behave in a certain way.

I think it is possible that the "social worker team" have stricter formal and informal rules than the "Rasta community team" has. If that is the case, it may result in that it is harder to break the norms for what is expected of a social worker than it is to not follow the ideals for how a typical Rasta should be. I also believe that the clear goals and guidelines which often are found in social work might lead to uniformity within the “social worker team” and make the group stronger. Social workers are often educated to fit into a role (Trish Hafford-Letchfield, 2011) which according to me could be seen as a socialization which clearly shows the ideals and values which you are expected to have as a social worker. It is also possible that the research and proven experience which social work often is based on, weigh increasing heavier in society in comparison to cultural patterns and traditions.

### **6.2.2 Rastafarian social workers’ role in a societal perspective**

It’s very likely to me that there is a pressure on social workers from the community to treat all people equal. Ms. Lennon described a development of the Jamaican society which has resulted in strong norms and ideals to treat people equally as a social worker today. This, while the literature describes that social workers in general have a big influence in the community: “Social workers have the opportunity to participate in every realm of political practice. Social workers serve as elected officials, campaign chairpersons, lobbyist, candidates, and voter-registration officials...” (D. Stout, 1998. P. 36). According this, it seems likely that the ideals which exist among social workers also effect the Jamaican society

as well as the social work within the Rasta group; either as a pressure on the group's ideals to become more equal, or by the fact that the Rasta group simply import these ideals in their social work.

Furthermore, the author Doru Buzducea (2010) explains that the world becomes more international, which in turn effects the social work. She means there is a common universal perception about how social work should strive for equality and justice, which results both in new responsibility and opportunities:

As a result of the globalization and its consequences, the social work became international. The practical interventions and, especially, the policies have exceeded the national borders for some time now. The global inter-dependence has created both new areas of responsibility and international opportunities for the social work (Buzducea, 2010. P. 38).

According to me, it is very likely that the ideals which are found within the global professional social work, has played a significant role in the Jamaican modernization project (which Ms. Lennon described), which in turn may have influenced social workers' tendency to make the Jamaican society and the Rastafarian community's values more equal. Maybe the Rastafarian social workers are effected by this international responsibility which Buzducea describes as a common pursuit of global goals in social work, and therefore takes the role as "agents of change". It's in my opinion very likely that this universal and common striving towards equality, which seems to exist within the social work, has convinced the Rastafarian social workers that these values are "right." Furthermore, it is possible that my interviewees has got a greater experience of what equality can be like through these global influences which seems to effect the social work than the other participants in the Rastafarian community has.

In addition, there might be ideals within the social work which not only include adopting equal values as a social worker, but also to spread these values further in order to improve other people's lives. From what I have found, this might provide a possible explanation for why Rastafarian social workers have taken the role as "agents of equality", which in my opinion may be based on the norm that people are better off if they are treated equally. This, at the same time as the social work

profession simply seem to have the possibility to change situation of women in the community, which Karen D. Stout describes like this:

The social work profession, through its members, is in a position to positively effect change regarding the status of women, given its emphasis on person-in-environment considerations and the CSWE mandate to teach social workers about policy and research, in addition to human behavior theory, practice, and field education (D. Stout, 1998. P. 40).

This influence, combined with the norms which seem to exist within the social work profession, could in my opinion provide an explanation to why Rastafarian social workers choose to distance themselves from the traditional and discriminating ideals and values regarding women which seems to exist among some Rastafarians communities.

### **6.3 Did the study subjects answer to my research questions?**

Thus, the purpose with the essay was to investigate how Rastafarian social workers, in their professional role, relate to the values which exist regarding women within the Rastafarian community. Since the study subjects I followed only where three, they couldn't possibly represent the Rasta group as a whole. Therefore, it is important to point out that they only responded based on their own perceptions and experiences and gave me an understanding for their individual images of the group's values. It is very possible that the study subjects I chose to follow have an exceptionally positive experience of the group's values and therefore reflects the group in a more favorable manner. While it is possible that the interviewees who chose to participate in my research partly did this because they actually could reflect the group in a positive light and felt secure in their roles as both Rastafarians and social workers.

I can also imagine that my research people are effected by the rest of the Jamaican society and therefore compare the Rasta group's ideals and values with the values represented by the rest of Jamaica. This in turn could lead to that I, from a different culture and society, have a different view on what equality actually means than they have. The Jamaican society is often portrayed as patriarchal (A.

Lawton, 2008), which in my opinion could result in that the study subjects were presented as more equal than what they would have been in a more equal country. Therefore, it might have been interesting for my study to follow Rastafarians who are social workers in different countries to get a broader picture of the social work within the group.

Anyway, I think that the three interviewees gave me answers to my research questions. With more time it would have been interesting to make more observations on the interviewees and their environments. I think it could have contributed a lot to the essay and provided an additional perspective on what reality looks like in practice. With my time frame, I only had time to make a few observations which didn't feel sufficiently credible and relevant to include in the essay. Despite this, it appeared clear to me during these observations, that practice and words aren't always the same. Maybe these eventually facades could be seen through with more observation of what Rastafarian groups values regarding women looks like in practice. It is also likely that the interviewees' stories had become deeper, more personal and perhaps more honest if I'd had got more time to immerse myself in them. However, based on my circumstances, I feel that I have got as much as I could during my research.

## **8 Final word**

This study aimed at investigating what ideals and values regarding women within the Rasta community look like and how Rastafarian social workers relate to these ideals. The question I assumed was: How do Rastafarian social workers, in their professional role, relate to the values which exist regarding women within the Rastafarian community?

To get answers to this question, I have used a qualitative method and followed three people with strong links to the Rastafarian group and to the social work through interviews and observations. However, I have chosen only to use material from the interviews in the result, discussion and reflection. Furthermore, the paper has been written from an individual level, which means that the interviewees only present their own views and are not representing the Rasta group as a whole.

Overall I think that I have received answers to my questions. All three study subjects seemed to adopt the equal values which are expected of social workers to have within the professional social work, while they opposed against the traditional values regarding women which exist within the Rastafarian community. This suggests that the Rastafarian social workers voluntarily assumed the mission as “equality agents” in purpose to invention in the Rastafarian group to make their values regarding women more equal.

Although I have got a lot of interesting information during the research, new questions have appeared and I think that there are lots of subjects that would be interesting to develop and investigate further. Some suggestions for further research are for example: What effects the social work within the Rastafarian community? Is the Rasta group really as equal as my study people highlighted? How are women actually treated in practice within the community? I think observations over time could provide useful answers to these questions since it is an interesting topic to investigate further.

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# **Appendix: Interview form 1**

## **Background**

- 1) Name, age, employment, family
- 2) How does it come that you belong to the Rastafarian group? /What is your connection to the Rasta group?
- 3) What is your experience of social work?

## **Values regarding women within the Rasta group**

- 4) What would you say characterizes the values within the Rasta Group?
- 5) What is, in your opinion, generally the view at women within the Rastafarian group?
- 6) What is, generally, the difference between the view at men and *women's autonomy* within the Rasta group?
- 7) What's the difference between the perception of men and *women's needs* in the Rasta group?
- 8) Rasta Group values often obtain as very patriarchal in the literature - what is your view on that?

## **Social work for women**

- 9) Is there any kind of social work especially for women by Rastas? If yes, which kind of work is there?
- 10) Do you think that the Rastafarian values effect you/social workers in the work for women? If that is the case, how?

## **Reflection of Rastafarian values within social work for women**

11) How do you think that Rasta group values regarding women reflect in the social work for women?

12) Can you describe the advantages with Rastafari values within the social work for women?

13) Can the Rastafarian values also be a disadvantage in the social work for women? If that is the case, how?