

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

<https://www.e-ir.info/2020/02/04/globalization-human-trafficking-and-tourism-in-the-caribbean/>

KENDRA MORANCY, FEB 4 2020

Sex tourism is a new phenomenon created out of the citizens of the global North's desires to travel to the exotic lands of the Global South. Much like human trafficking, this topic is actually quite old and has gained a lot of international attention due to its portrayal in films, books or the media. Both of these occurrences have foundations based in Westerner's interactions with non-Europeans or "Others". These interactions included first slavery, colonization and now what we like to call globalization. While globalization might have had positive effects for all of those involved, it also created new avenues to reinforce inequality and exploitation across gendered, sexed and racial lines.

To gain an overall understanding of each of the major concepts, I will define them using various sources of literature. First, there needs to be a link made between sex tourism and human trafficking. The former is described as,

An ambiguous term with some observers applying it strictly to organized tours in which sex with prostitutes is the main attraction, while others extend the concept to those who travel for other reasons but hire prostitutes while away. (Eirienne, 2009)

Within sex tourism there is a more sinister form known as child sex tourism. A report written by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner stated that "this is an exploitation of children for sexual purposes by who those who travel to engage in sexual activities with children" (Combating Child Sex Tourism, 2013). This includes child trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography and the selling of children for sexual exploitation. As one can perceive from the definitions given above, sex tourism is a form of human trafficking in itself.

There are three main elements of human trafficking that create a link to sex tourism. The first is the action, which involves recruiting someone in the context of sex tourism. The trafficked person is taken or moved by the use of threats, force or promises in the form of payments or benefits. The second is means by which those actions are carried out. Promises or threats are how the trafficker is able to control the trafficked persons with their consent and long after their consent is revoked. The third aspect of trafficking is the purpose which obviously pertains to sexual relations. These definitions can get fuddled in the literature or even viewed as judgmental in the case of prostitution where some participants may refer to it as "sex work". Another context in which these explanations might be cast aside is in the event that child sex tourism may occur in a country where youth are able to consent to sexual activities at an earlier age than 18 (Eirienne, 2009). Regardless of the age restrictions created by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the laws of individual states themselves, there is no way to control the age in which an individual engages in sex willingly or unwillingly. This is especially the case in Caribbean states with far weaker, centralized governments plagued by poverty.

Sex tourism networks within this region are propelled by specific factors. In this text, I aim to argue that social, economic, political, racial and gendered constructions are the drivers of these types of exploitations of Caribbean women and men. All of these factors have a root in the first contact between the West and various people of color and continue to exist and evolve with society. Slavery and colonization brought about the hyper sexuality that has become the reality of the Caribbean people. According to Kempadoo, this oversexualization is a colonial identity (2004). She even described these former colonies as territories that were once sex havens for colonial elites and that they are now frequented by sex tourists. In this same piece, an excerpt from Frantz Fanon says,

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

Written by Kendra Morancy

Colonial discourses are deeply embedded in the psyche and behavior of the colonized. Such images are a part of a broader colonial regime of oppression that is sedimented in the hearts and minds of Caribbean men and women themselves.

Though colonization may have ended, the ideas that came with it did not dissipate. They were continued through the implementation of a new form of Western control, otherwise known as globalization. Globalization is described as a mixture or complex of processes that sometimes overlap and interlock but also contradictory and oppositional (Mukherjee, 2012). The processes associated with globalization had good and bad effects on those in the global North and South. This “borderless” world brought about new levels of technology, trade and communication that would never have been possible before. I mention globalization as a major theme within the context of sex tourism because the concept of a “borderless” world has actually made it easier to conduct this crime at a cheaper, quicker and more covert fashion.

One major critique of globalization is that it comes at a cost in which there is a decline of a state’s capacity to organize the economic and political life of its citizens (Mukherjee, 2012). In other words, it becomes much harder to regulate the equal distribution of wealth, resources and ability to express themselves politically. Hence this era being the most unequal in the history of the world. There is also the trend of creating a more homogenized culture since these globalized processes started. This same author describes this as neo-imperialism. Neo-imperialism involves economic force, coercion, imposition, and bribery. It is not so much concerned with expanding control over territories but more so the economic control and shaping of regional economic structure in a way that makes weaker states dependent on regional powers (Wigell, 2015). The impact of neo-imperialism on the Global South is the creation of new avenues of reinforcing past structures and heightening illicit crimes such as sex tourism.

One would assume that there would be just as much opposition towards this neo-imperialism as there was for slavery and colonization. Masked with the term globalization, a term that sounds so enlightening and forward thinking, people all over the world accept it because of free trade and the focus on individual rights towards education and other things that used to be considered luxuries. This intense focus on individuals surprisingly did not lead to a better understanding of others, especially those who come from diverse backgrounds (Eirienne, 2009). So it is not a shock as to why a centuries old issue such as human trafficking has morphed into what is now sex tourism.

Discussion

The Caribbean is a place defined as a region created through a history of Spanish, British, Dutch, French, and Danish settlement and colonial rule. This history is also riddled with the senseless genocide of the Caribbean native peoples as well as the forced importation of millions of African slaves and indentured workers from Asia and Europe (Kempadoo, 2004). This history has led to a region that is characterized with a very diverse array of ethnicities, cultures, religions, languages, what constitutes the diaspora and notions such as transnationality. The term transnational involves the movement of people across international borders in which these individuals maintain or build networks of connection between their county of origin and the place that they have settled (Fouron & Glick-Schiller, 2001). Due to a history of slavery, the Caribbean people also had to deal with white supremacy, colonial control and racism. Much of these islands recently gained their political independence towards the end of the twentieth century. This is a short history in which these countries have been able to officially govern themselves without the political power resting in the hands of European powers. The islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique are still territories of France and Montserrat and the Cayman Islands remain under British rule. Haiti has been free since 1804 (2004). This shows the various degrees of “freedom” that the Caribbean states live in. The mixture of cultures and groups also portray that the Caribbean identity is not a singular thing but a mixture of identities that have been continuously changing since the transatlantic slave trade.

One important characteristic that has unwillingly been associated with the Caribbean population is the concept of hypersexuality. As I described above, the Caribbean body has been portrayed as an exotic wonderland that is full of resources and the materialistic desires of those that dwell in the global North. The concept of the lustful Caribbean people has beginnings linked to the far-fetched writings and images constructed by the first European

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

Written by Kendra Morancy

travelers, historians, sociologists and anthropologists who ventured onto the untouched Caribbean islands. The native Arawak people were the first to receive the racialized judgement that consisted of them being perceived as cannibals and sexually promiscuous people who needed to be placed under the jurisdiction of the tamed Europeans (Kempadoo, 2004). The contact with the Europeans through colonization, the importation of African slaves and the rough conditions that they endured led to the decimation of this native population. This left the African population to endure the remnants of this racialized contact.

The concept of race plays a huge part in the formation of the Caribbean culture whether it is denied by the current population or not. This was the source of the oppression, discrimination and social inequalities that the darker skinned people faced and still face today. Everyone knows that slavery inside and outside of the Caribbean islands was based on one's phenotype. There are social, economic and political hierarchies defined by one's skin color, hair and body type, facial features and even the languages that they speak (Kempadoo, pg.7, 2004). This hierarchy ranges from brown, Indio, light skinned, dark skinned and brown. According to Kempadoo, race is not used widely in the Caribbean because what we know as ethnicities are used to describe themselves (2004). For example, titles such as Afro-Cuban are very common place. The fact that they have to categorize this way at all emphasizes the matter of race and its importance in the structure of the Caribbean society especially economic structures. In this text I over emphasize the concepts of skin color, language and other physical features because of the role that one's phenotype plays in processes discussed which heighten the likelihood of sex tourism in this region.

To gain a better understanding of these current structures, it is important to uncover the reality of these black people in the new world post-slavery. In this post-emancipation state, the Europeans and White American social scientist reported that the Caribbean culture within the home and family life deviated from the dominant ideas of what a family is supposed to be. This Western idea of family consisted of a patrilineal, heterosexual, monogamous, and male-centric household and that was not the norm for the Caribbean working class at that time. Marriage was not a common occurrence but partnerships and sexual relationships were. For this reason, the Europeans were quick to cast terms of judgement on this black working class. This included words such as "mating", "irregular", conjugal relations, loose sexual practices and their children were deemed illegitimate. This stereotyping became known as "the Negro" condition (Kempadoo, 2004). The American sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, pushed the idea that the black family life had broken down as a result of slavery and created this deviant, sexually loose behaviors that are seen to be dominant in Caribbean culture (Semmes, 2001). I agree with this observation as it is a known fact that the concept of the nuclear family was a privilege for the white people during slavery. Black slave families were torn apart because men, women and children were seen as commodities for labor not human beings who desired to enjoy the institution of marriage. A part of the slave culture consisted of Black women often being raped by White men. This was justified by the image of Black women being lascivious (McGruder, 2010). The lack of autonomy over their body or their sexuality was dehumanizing and would be a possible influence to the low percentages of nuclear families or sex within monogamous perimeters. So it is logical for Frazier to make these observations about the broken black family and its links to slavery.

The American anthropologist couple, Melville Jean and Frances Herskovits produced works based off of their studies on West African people and those within the Diaspora. These expansive studies changed the discourse surrounding the black concepts of family, sex and relationships in Western scholarship. Melville Herskovits rejected and rebutted against the past ideas that behavior patterns are confined to certain races or purely caused by slavery and plantation life (Kempadoo, 2004). This work argues instead that culture is learned and not determined by some element in the biology of a group of people, meaning that traditions can be passed down within a group. These anthropologists also introduced informal polygyny as a legitimate and acceptable relationship for Afro-Caribbean people in a positive light. This obsession with the Caribbean sexuality continued with the Europeans not being able to keep away their strict definitions of what they believed to be the proper family and sexual relations. This is evident in the way that when they finally accepted that Caribbean people had different socially acceptable forms of unions and sexual relationships, it was described as "outside" relations, "dual marriage systems" and that these relationships allowed for men and women to enjoy "unrestricted sexual freedom". I do think that some Caribbean women probably do want to be in those situations. Sexuality for women is not one singular experience and it can not be assumed that all of these women desire a marriage or a

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

Written by Kendra Morancy

monogamous relationship. In *Sexing The Caribbean*, Kempadoo says that Heriques stated that “ so many marriages are arranged on a basis of color rather than mutual attraction” (Kempadoo, 2004). That is him arguing that the men who are married, in this case the elites for socio-economic reasons, use these sexual arrangements to fulfill their sexual desires with other women and he believed that this was normal. This was the phase in society in which it became normalized for an upper-class men to freely access and dispose of material, economic assets for sexual satisfaction due to the simple fact that they are biologically male and free to do so. This left poor men and all women out of the equation as equal participants in this search for sexual freedom.

This proves that the race, gendered and sexual factors which make up the entire Caribbean population throughout its entire written history is in fact hegemonic. It started with colonization, slavery and lingered post-emancipation within this region. A common link here is the demand placed upon these people in terms of the workforce, family structure and nation building. This is evident today in the rise of sex tourism industry. This industry preys upon several factors and is maintained by settler state institutions. Globalization, as mentioned above, is the most dominant driving force behind what keeps sexual tourism alive in the Caribbean. In terms of the most recent post-emancipation period, the developing world which included the Caribbean, underwent a phase of structural adjustment. This meant that these states accepted major debt in the form of loans from international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) in efforts to develop economically, socially and politically according to Western standards. These loans came with recommendations on how to reconstruct and develop with the underlying focus of these states eventually paying back these institutions what they were initially lent. One of these recommendations is tourism as a potential sector of economic development (Padilla, 2008). In the case of the Caribbean, this seems to be the main if not the only development strategy pushed by the West. Structural adjustment and economic liberalization policies pushed upon the developing Caribbean countries has led to the formulation of women and children as the “ new raw resources” for national and international business development under the guise of tourism (Mukherjee, 2012). These policies have not allowed room for other industries that might be more environmentally friendly, less socially decapitating and more lucrative to thrive. Tourism is an industry that relies heavily on a service sector driven by a willing population and these states’ abilities to maintain a “safe or paradise-like” reputation internationally. States such as Haiti struggle to maintain a favorable reputation to attract tourist which results in the discontinuation of contracts with cruiseslines, hotels and other important aspects of the tourism industry. These factors are all linked to weak governance and the failure of economic liberalization policies and structural adjustment. I think that this is actually a continuation of prior systems of economic exploitation imposed through Western influence during slavery but with a new name. This is evident in the consistent reliance on external influences to maintain some type of economic and political stability using indicators created by the Great powers. My aim is not to argue that tourism is a bad industry but that it is not the most successful way to generate wealth for the Caribbean population because it creates more dependency between the Global North and South with detrimental effects in the form of sex tourism.

Technology, despite its positive attributes towards society as a whole, has actually been a major factor in maintaining sex tourism as a lucrative crime. As technology advances, the easier it is to buy women and young children for sex abroad. The internet is practically a virtual breeding ground for sex tourism (Hughes, 1996). With one click, travelers from the global North are able to purchase cheap holiday packages and jet off to Jamaica or the Bahamas to enjoy a vacation. The first online prostitution service business, was created in Seattle, Washington in 1994 (Mukherjee, 2012). Organized prostitution tours from the U.S. appeared on the internet by Spring 1995. Advertisements for group prostitution tours in the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean were posted with the headlines, “Tropical Paradise Vacations for single men”. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Online Services often do not willingly admit to the underground sex industry’s presence online. This secrecy is due to the large amounts of money that the ISPs make off of the sex industry advertisements. The lack of regulation of the Internet also contributes to this rise in sex tourism linked to the increase in technology. The media in the form of TV shows, movies, and books that are so widespread and easily attainable through the internet reiterate the hypersexuality associated with the Caribbean. Terry Macmillan’s 1996 novel, *How Stella Got Her Groove* is the best example of this oversexualization of black Caribbean people (Macmillian, 1996). In the book, she engages in a sexual relationship with a much younger local Jamaican man who the main character describes as “primitive”, “exotic” and “ Mr. Espresso”.

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

Written by Kendra Morancy

Applying these terms in this context is the “Otherization” of black Caribbean bodies. This concept of “Other” is linked to racism and places an emphasis on the differences of these people. The Other, in this case the Caribbean people, are not only viewed as distinct but lesser than the dominant group. The dominant group represents the Western world and its views of the “Others” (Eirene, 2009). Apparently this constructed view of “Other”, is a crucial factor in the act of buying sex. This author draws on the work of Razack(1998), who states that prostitution is, “as vital to white supremacy and capitalism as it is to patriarchy”. She also contends that women that dwell in certain spaces (poor) are often assumed to be prostitutes. These women are also being racialized because when they venture into more wealthy areas, it is assumed that they are prostitutes once again based off of their “Otherness”. The areas in which these prostitutes live are known as anomalous zones. Anomalous zones are where visitors leave behind their social norms to partake in their sexual activities. By coming and going, the customers are able to maintain their ideas concerning respectability and viewing themselves as superior in terms of gender, class and race (Eirene, 2009). This also causes the buyers of the sex or the visitors of these anomalous zones to feel little to no conviction or obligation to care about the well-being of these “lowly” viewed bodies. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman states that the tourists may view foreign culture as a “product something to dabble with and taste but not something to analyze, empathize with or internalize”(Eirene, 2009). Another way that the concept of otherness is used is when the travelers may view the natives as a spectacle. This is why Westerners may travel thousands of miles just to end up spending their time in Western hotels with a few random touches of local flair in order to bring comfortability. This is an indication that these travelers don’t really aim to be in close contact with the people or the culture that they have travelled to go see. That might not necessarily always be the case but the act of placing these racialized people in the land of “Other” automatically places them in a category of less than or as a far removed part of life that is here to fulfill their Western sexual desires due to a perceived lack of a moral code (Eirene, 2009).

This otherness is also extremely gendered in the sense that the majority of human trafficking victims or sex tourism participants are women. These forms of exploitation are primarily conducted by men with the sense that they have power, agency and sexual rights due to their sex. One of the concepts of matrifocality based off of studies taken on the Caribbean family states that male power has diminished and become marginalized by the social prestige accorded to the mother-child bond and female centered character of the household (Kempadoo, 2004). Apparently the best way to reassert their power and authority as men is through sexual relations with more than one woman. This way of thinking is a source of the lowly status of women in Caribbean culture. Domestic violence also runs rampant in this culture as a form of resistance towards efforts of gender inequality in this region. This is evident in job discrimination on the job and the lack of enforcement of child support laws (Gender in the Caribbean, n.d.). The basic belief that women belong in a subordinate role still exists and has roots in prior European contacts. This, in turn, maintains the anomalous space that prostitutes and other participants of sex tourism take up. This term is best described as “Heteropatriarchy”. Heteropatriarchy is a mixture of heterosexism and patriarchy. Kempadoo states that heteropatriarchy signals a distinction and relatedness between the ways in which sexuality and gender are socially, legally and politically organized (2004). It is a way in the Caribbean for heterosexual, promiscuous masculinity to keep the subordinate feminine sexuality alive.

Conclusion

Sex tourism is a form of human trafficking that exists in the Caribbean region due to internal and external factors. One notable internal factor is the consistently high levels of poverty. Much like every other crime, the aspiration for money and a better life is a driving force in one’s actions. This is the case for sex tourism participants whether it be with consent, like in the case of prostitutes or without consent. Women and children are compelled into the sex industry through violence, victimization, lack of economic needs and in turn often fall into debt bondage or enslavement. Selling sex makes on average \$6 billion U.S. annually (Mukherjee, 2012). For some people it is much too lucrative regardless of the health and social implications. Other major internal factors that maintain sex tourism systems in the Caribbean such as gender constructions and family life have been influenced by the settler states continuously. This is shown in the intense dependency on the Global North for economic growth and the requirement of maintaining a “fantasy like” reputation in order for this industry to thrive.

This consistent aspiration for money and the Western view of life is an on-going project that dates back to slavery

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

Written by Kendra Morancy

but refuses to go away with time. Structural adjustment and economic liberalization policies took over where the former colonial powers left off. This was done in the guise that they hold the key to bettering the lives of those who live less developed countries. In reality, the West has used these policies with the backing of increased technology, and the racialized and gender concept of “Other”, to maintain their interest and hegemonic structures. Sex tourism is really not a new phenomenon, but the recreation of old racist and sexist measures of exploitation. All of these factors whether it be social, economic, political, racial and gendered link back to the overarching theme of globalization’s exigent role of driving the exploitations of Caribbean women and men in sex tourism.

References

Mukherjee, A. (2012). SEX TOURISM – AN UGLY FACE OF GLOBALIZATION. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 16(1), 69-81. doi:10.1177/0973598412110006

Kempadoo, K. (2004). *Sexing the Caribbean : Gender, Race and Sexual Labor*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge.

Combating child sex tourism. (2013, April 10). Retrieved April 18, 2018.

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. (n.d.). Retrieved April 18, 2018.

Wigell, M. (2015). Conceptualizing regional powers’ geoeconomic strategies: neo-imperialism, neo-mercantilism, hegemony, and liberal institutionalism. *Asia Europe Journal*, 14(2), 135–151. doi: 10.1007/s10308-015-0442-x

Semmes, C. E. (2001, June). E. Franklin Frazier’s Theory of the Black Family.

McGRUDER, K. (2010). Pathologizing Black Sexuality: The U.S. Experience. In BATTLE J. & BARNES S. (Eds.), *Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies* (pp. 101-118). Rutgers University Press. Retrieved February 1, 2020.

Padilla, M. (2008). *Caribbean Pleasure Industry: Tourism, Sexuality, and AIDS in the Dominican Republic*. United States: University of Chicago Press.

Gender in the Caribbean. (n.d.). Retrieved April 24, 2018.

Hughes, D. (1996). Sex Tours via the Internet. *Agenda*, (28), 71. doi: 10.2307/4065760

Eirienne, A. K. (2009). “Child Sex Tourism: ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ in a Globalized World.” *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 1(11). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=34>

About the author:

Kendra Morancy is a third year joint MA/PhD student at Florida International University. She completed her requirements for the MA in the African and African Diaspora Studies program where she wrote and defended a thesis on the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts in Haiti. Currently, she is preparing for comprehensive exams for the PhD in International Relations. Her current research focuses on human trafficking, sex tourism, and development studies in the Caribbean. Her future career goal is to work either with the federal government or an international institution as an analyst. Overall, she wants to use her skills to effectively help solve societal issues that impact disadvantaged groups.

Globalization, Human Trafficking and Tourism in the Caribbean

Written by Kendra Morancy