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To cite this article: Julia O'Connell Davidson (2004) 'Child sex tourism': an anomalous form of movement?, *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 12:1, 31-46, DOI: [10.1080/1460846042000207123](https://doi.org/10.1080/1460846042000207123)



To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1460846042000207123>

 Published online: 22 Jan 2007.

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'Child Sex Tourism': An Anomalous Form of Movement?

JULIA O'CONNELL DAVIDSON

ABSTRACT Over the past decade, public and policy concern has increasingly been expressed about the phenomenon of 'child sex tourism', which is widely understood as an aberrant form of movement that can be cleanly demarcated from 'sex tourism' and 'tourism' more generally. This paper critically examines that understanding, and argues that campaigns against 'child sex tourism' that fail to acknowledge its connections to and commonalities with other forms of tourism are likely to have a limited impact on the problem they set out to address, and may even have unintended and negative consequences for local adults and children.

Introduction

In European Union and other affluent Western countries, public and policy debate on 'migration' typically focuses on those forms of migration that are viewed as a threat to national sovereignty and security, and/or to national/racial/ethnic purity. It is thus movements from poor or relatively economically disadvantaged countries to more affluent countries, from countries with predominantly black and brown populations to countries with predominantly white populations, and from Muslim to Christian countries that have received the lion's share of attention and concern, with very little interest being shown in flows of affluent, white and/or Christian persons around the world. Western tourists, gap year students, international business people, and expatriates, for example, are not usually imagined as 'migrants' (even though they may spend longer in a foreign country than, say, seasonal agricultural workers from poor countries who would be defined as 'migrant workers'), and while migratory flows from poor to affluent regions are widely regarded as problematic, movements from affluent to poor countries have not generally been identified as posing economic, social or political problems (see King, 2002).

One form of movement from affluent to developing countries that has been a focus of anxiety over the past decade is the phenomenon known as 'child sex tourism'. As a result of awareness-raising and lobbying campaigns mounted by a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), most particularly End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT), the 1990s witnessed growing international concern about the fact that some European, North American, Japanese and Australian men travel to poor and developing countries in order to sexually abuse local children, and a number of countries introduced

legislative changes to address the problem. On first inspection, increasing popular and policy interest in a problem associated with movements from affluent to developing countries might appear to represent a refreshing change from traditional approaches to 'migration', and to open up opportunities for more critical and reflexive public debate on the global inequalities that underpin *all* forms of population movement in the contemporary world. However, as this paper will argue, because dominant discourse on 'child sex tourism' rests on the assumption that for both moral and practical purposes, a clear boundary exists between 'child sex tourism' on the one hand, and 'sex tourism' and 'tourism' on the other, and detaches all three from their basis in global political and economic inequalities, it closes off rather than opens up such possibilities.

Sex, Travel and 'Child Sex Tourism'

There is a strong historical association between travel, sex, race and political domination (Nagel, 2003; Gill, 2003; Enloe, 1993; Hyam, 1990). For centuries, Africa, the Americas and Asia 'were figured in European lore as libidinally eroticised... a *porno-tropics*... a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears' (McClintock, 1995, p. 22), and as Ann Laura Stoler (1997, p. 14) notes:

Colonial observers and participants in the imperial enterprise expressed unwavering interest in the sexual interface of the colonial encounter. Probably no subject is discussed more than sex in the colonial literature and no subject more frequently invoked to foster the racist stereotypes of European society.

Today, travel is still often associated with a quest for sexual experience with 'exotic' Others, but there is also a more general association between travel and sex. Sex is widely understood to be part of the tourist experience, and whether with other tourists, with local 'holiday romances', or with sex workers, many people expect to have more sex whilst on vacation (Oppermann 1998; Clift and Carter, 2000; Ryan and Hall, 2001). Within this, the kind of sex they have is often more 'casual', more risky and more risqué than the sex they would have at home. There are European holiday destinations that are renowned for the high level of tourist-tourist sexual interaction, and for the overtly sexualised nature of tourism for young people in particular. Commercial sex, including sexual entertainment such as lap dance, strip shows and live sex shows as well as prostitution, is a feature of tourism in many tourist destinations in both affluent and developing countries. The sex sectors of some European and American cities (for instance, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Las Vegas) are tourist attractions in and of themselves, just as the Pat Pong district of Bangkok is considered by many tourists to be a 'must see', even if they have no intention of actually buying a sexual service. If tourism is, to a large extent, sex, what is 'sex tourism'? The term, though widely used, is remarkably difficult to define (Ryan, 2000, Oppermann, 1998). For some, a 'sex tourist' is a person (usually a man) who takes an organised tour, in which the tour operator arranges access to prostitutes along with flights, hotels, airport transfers, etc. But this definition would exclude vast numbers of men who make their own travel arrangements, or take 'normal' package holidays, and then proceed to avail themselves of the services of prostitutes in the tourist areas they visit. And widening the definition of a 'sex

tourist' invariably leads to other problems—does the term only refer to those who travel with the explicit and conscious intention of buying sex, or does it also include those who travel for 'ordinary' reasons, but happen to buy sex one night because they are approached by a sex worker and think, perhaps through the haze of drink or drugs, 'Why not?'. And what of those who enter into what they consider to be a holiday romance with a local, but also buy meals for and give gifts to their 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'?

Such definitional problems, alongside the fact that prostitution is not universally criminalized so that prostitution-tourism, organised or otherwise, can be quite legally pursued in some countries, make any blanket condemnation of 'sex tourism' politically controversial. But 'child sex tourism' appears to be another matter entirely. Who could fail to be appalled by the idea of Western paedophiles travelling to poor countries in order to buy experiences that are 'forbidden in their own country' (O'Grady, 1996, p. 10)? Because the campaign against 'child sex tourism' mounted by ECPAT in the 1990s presented the problem largely as one involving sexual deviants ('paedophiles' and 'child molesters') taking advantage of either weak or inadequate child protection laws or poor law enforcement in Third World countries, it was extraordinarily effective in terms of garnering international sympathy and support not just from policy makers, politicians, journalists and the general public, but also from representatives of the tourist industry and local and national tourism officials. Whilst airline executives and tour operators are hardly likely to wish to involve themselves in a campaign to impose higher moral standards on their customers than those required in law, or to try to police the consensual sexual behaviours of adults who happen to have traveled with them, they are (with some notable exceptions¹) as likely as the next person to want to voice indignation about paedophiles.

Even commentators who in general take a rigorous and critical approach to the analysis of the sex sector have sometimes been happy to go along with sweeping claims about 'child sex tourism'. For example, Lin Lim states that:

Child sex tourism—"tourism organized with the primary purpose of facilitating the effecting of a commercial sexual relationship with a child" (United Nations, 1995, p. 13)—is a particularly serious form of child prostitution, partly because it attracts paedophiles and also because it has been responsible for a palpable increase in the violation of not only young girls but also young boys (1998, p. 183).

Though perhaps unintended, the implication is that we should view the violation of young boys as *particularly* serious, and consider it somehow worse for a child prostitute to be used by a paedophile client than by a 'normal' adult. And yet Lim, like ECPAT and others who campaign against 'child sex tourism', also follows the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child in defining a 'child' as a person under the age of 18. Defined as such, the majority of child prostitutes in the contemporary world are actually too old to be of interest to those who would clinically be defined as 'paedophiles' (they are aged above 13). Moreover, Lim goes on to note that 'ordinary' tourists can become situational child abusers while they are out of their own country, and to observe that the broader tourist industry is partially implicated in the tourist-related sex trade:

Although reputable travel companies may not intentionally wish to promote sex tourism, their marketing materials often help to sustain the flow, for example, by stressing the attractions of the “nightlife” of certain resorts or by promulgating certain stereotypes of women and children in developing countries (Lim, 1998, p. 185).

There is thus a tension in her discussion of ‘child sex tourism’. At one moment, it appears as a particularly serious form of child prostitution primarily organized by or for paedophiles, but the next it is enmeshed in and reproduced by the ordinary tourist industry. Such uncertainty is well founded, for it is by no means clear that ‘child sex tourism’—whether involving paedophiles or ‘ordinary’ tourists—can be meaningfully separated from ‘sex tourism’ or from ‘tourism’ more generally.

‘Paedophiles who Travel Abroad’ and Campaigns Against Them

Although the discourse that surrounds it is often emotive, salacious, panicky and the magnitude of the phenomenon grossly exaggerated, ‘paedophile tourism’ is certainly not a figment of journalists’ or campaigners’ imagination. It is a reality, and numerous cases have been documented in which Western men travel as tourists, or take up permanent or temporary residence in poor and developing countries in order to gain sexual access to local children (Ireland, 1993; Seabrook, 2000). The countries/regions targeted include Sri Lanka (Beddoe, 1998; Ratnapala, 1999), Goa (O’Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1996a), Thailand (Montgomery, 1998, 2001), Cambodia (Foggo, 2002), the Philippines (Lee-Wright, 1990), the Dominican Republic (de Moya and Garcia, 1999), Costa Rica (Aguilar, 1994). One of the most obvious explanations for this phenomenon is the fact that Westerners know that it is easier, cheaper and safer to obtain sexual access to a child in poor and developing countries than it is back home, and a key objective of campaigns against ‘child sex tourism’ has been to shift the perception that sex with children in poorer countries is a low-risk crime by raising awareness and encouraging the adoption of laws and policies in both receiving and sending countries that will make the prosecution of foreigners who commit sexual offences against children abroad easier and more likely.

A first step was to put pressure on governments in receiving countries to take the issue seriously. Whilst no country ever actively promoted tourist-related child prostitution, the general phenomenon of prostitution-tourism was viewed by some governments in the 1980s and early 1990s as an inevitable, and fairly unproblematic, by-product of tourist development (Mitter, 1986; O’Connell Davidson, 1998). Part of the ECPAT campaign has been to encourage governments to recognise and condemn the sexual exploitation of children within prostitution-tourism. So, for example, in 1993, a number of political and community leaders from Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and other countries were asked by ECPAT to sign a statement saying: ‘I oppose the prostitution of children and view with concern the growing incidence of this practice. The sexual abuse of children by foreign tourists must be ended’ (O’Grady, 1996, p. 50).

Campaigners against 'child sex tourism' have also sought to identify and counteract other factors behind the relatively low risk of prosecution associated with child abuse in poor and developing countries (see Roujanavong, 1994), and have drawn attention to a lack of will to combat the problem on the part of the governments of affluent countries which send 'child sex tourists'. Campaigners pointed out, for example, that Western governments' lack of interest in crimes against 'Other' children led many sex tourist receiving countries to pursue a policy of deporting foreign nationals accused of child sexual offences rather than prosecuting them, and this, combined with the fact that offenders could often bribe their way out of trouble, meant that people who had been caught abusing children abroad could return home and continue their lives without fear of prosecution. ECPAT therefore lobbied hard and with a good deal of success for sending countries to introduce extraterritorial criminal laws that would allow states to 'penalize the sexual crimes of their nationals or residents when perpetrated against children in other countries' (Muntarhorn, 1998, p. 7). Such laws were not to be seen as a substitute for, but as a complement to, 'effective laws, policies, and law/policy enforcement in the destination countries of such exploiters' (Muntarhorn, 1998, p. 7). By 1998, 20 countries had introduced extraterritorial laws pertaining to child sex offences committed abroad, but in many of these countries, no court cases had yet been initiated. Germany, the country where most cases had been pursued, had only prosecuted 37 people under these laws, and only six of these cases led to conviction (Muntarhorn, 1998, p. 19).

Individuals believed to profit by organising 'child sex tours' to countries where child prostitutes are more cheaply and readily available were another focus of concern in campaigns against 'child sex tourism'. Again, lobbyists often met with success. The British Government enacted legislation in 1996—Sexual Offences (Conspiracy and Incitement)—designed to 'strengthen action against those in the UK who organise sex tours or who encourage others to travel abroad for the purpose of sexually exploiting children' (Home Office, 1996, p. 10). In Australia, the Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Act came into effect in 1994, and covered, among other things, 'those responsible for organizing overseas tours for the purpose of engaging in sexual relations or activities with minors' (Hall, 1998, p. 90).

Yet the term 'organised sex tour' is somewhat misleading. There are no 'paedophile package tour operators', garnering huge profits by chartering planes and block booking hotels in 'child sex capitals' for large numbers of individuals intent on sexually abusing small children. Although there is some evidence to suggest that organisations that support and champion paedophilia have facilitated their members travel to poor and developing countries in order to gain sexual access to children, either by providing information and advice or occasionally by more direct means, these organisations are few and far between, and in any case operate more as collectives than as large scale business enterprises. But not all 'paedophiles who travel abroad' rely on informal networks with others like themselves to provide them with access to children. Some make use of facilities that are primarily geared towards the interests of 'ordinary' sex tourists, and this draws attention to a key weakness in analyses that assume a clear line of demarcation between 'child sex tourism' and 'sex tourism' more generally.

Blurring the Boundary

Travel and the Single Male (TSM) is an American-based organisation run by and for sex tourists and boasts some 5000 members. It publishes a guidebook and sells club membership for US\$50 per annum. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, discounts in some hotels and brothels, and most importantly, are provided access to the TSM internet site. This provides information on travel and prostitution in various countries around the world, access to soft-core pornographic photographs of female sex workers from those countries, two message boards and a chat room for members to swap 'sexperiences', views, 'news' and handy travel tips. The worldview of TSM members typifies that of Western heterosexual men who habitually practice sex tourism to poor and developing countries, which is to say that it is profoundly misogynist, homophobic and racist (O'Connell Davidson, 1995, 1998, 2001; O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1999; Seabrook, 1997).

In 1998, Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor and I interviewed several American TSM members in Boca Chica, the Dominican Republic, as well as two expatriates whose bars, and photographs of their female bar staff, feature in the information provided on the Dominican Republic on TSM's website, and other expatriates whose names also feature in the 'chat' between members posted on the website. A group of American expatriates and sex tourists linked to TSM (one of whom was a New Jersey police officer) identified one of their cronies as having 'an obsession with virgins'. They told us that the man concerned had paid the families of eight Dominican girl children aged around eleven in order to rape them, and had shown them pornographic photographs of one of his victims. Subsequent interviews with a range of informants led us to believe that the man with 'a thing for virgins' secured access to children through an American expatriate and his Dominican wife who together run a brothel in Boca Chica catering to demand from tourist men, including TSM members (O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 2001). Further evidence of a link between TSM and child sexual exploitation comes from postings on the message board about a man who, Ministry of Tourism officials informed us, had been deported in 1997. During a police clampdown on child prostitution that year, 'Mr D', a French Canadian, was found to be organising the prostitution of minors from his hotel in Boca Chica. A posting from TSM's message board describes Mr D's hotel prior to its closure and his deportation:

many of the male guests and others from outside the hotel hang out [in the hotel bar] drinking. This as you can guess also draws the attention of the *chicas* and a number of them hang about as well. D. does not in any way discourage this as he has correctly concluded that having the girls there also keeps the guys there longer and keeps the drinks flowing... A girl... was knocking on my door literally 2 minutes after my checking in, asking if I wanted a blow job... I enjoyed my stay completely... A few girls were also staying at the hotel... They are often available for entertainment as you might expect (posted 4.9.97).

TSM is not unique, for there are many other clubs, guides and businesses catering to demand from 'normal' sex tourists (of whom more will be said below) that also facilitate paedophile tourists' sexual access to younger local children, even if those who run them are normally careful to make disclaimers

about child prostitution and to ensure that their published materials contain no reference to or photographs of those under 18. Indeed, one often cited example of the successful prosecution of a 'child sex tour' operator actually involved a British man, Michael Clarke, whose business ('Paradise Express' holidays to the Philippines) was geared to the desires of 'ordinary' sex tourists rather than paedophiles. In something of a 'sting' operation, Clarke agreed to the request of an investigative journalist and a Christian Aid worker, who were posing as paedophile tourists, for underage girls for sex. His actions were secretly filmed, which led to Clarke's arrest and trial for procuring child prostitutes and inducing others to be clients of child prostitutes. He was sentenced to sixteen years in jail, followed by deportation from the Philippines (Kane, 1998).

Though Clarke's actions are not defensible in any way, I do not think that on the basis of the evidence available he can properly be described as an organiser of 'child sex tours'. He was a man attempting (and some say rather unsuccessfully) to operate a business catering to sex tourists in general, but who was apparently willing to accommodate the tastes of paedophiles when approached and asked to do so. The distinction is important if we are to see, rather than turn a blind eye to, the ways in which 'sex tourism' and 'child sex tourism' are bound up in each other, and how both are bound up in tourism more generally. And once the interconnections between 'child sex tourism', 'sex tourism' and 'tourism' are acknowledged, it becomes clear that the impact of campaigns against 'child sex tourism' may be more limited, and more ambiguous, than might first be assumed.

Travel, Sex and Inequality

Tourists have sex—commercial and non-commercial—in holiday destinations in affluent as well as poor countries. However, sites of sex tourism in developing countries can be distinguished from those in affluent countries not necessarily by the existence of a large, diverse, formally organized sex industry serving demand from tourist clients, but more particularly by the existence of a busy informal sex sector. In this latter sector, local/migrant people (both adult and child) enter into a wide range of sexual-economic exchanges with tourists. For instance, there are adult and child prostitutes working either independently or under the control of a third party, soliciting custom from beaches, parks and ordinary tourist bars; there are pimps and hustlers (both adult and child) offering to procure all manner of sexual experiences for tourists; and there are individuals who may not define themselves as 'prostitutes' or 'sex workers', but who seek sexual relationships with tourists either as a means of accessing a life-style they cannot afford, or in the hope of receiving gifts that will supplement their very low income from hotel or bar work, or because they wish to migrate to a richer country and hope to find a sponsor or marriage partner who will facilitate their migration.

Prostitute-client exchanges in the informal sector are often more open-ended and loosely specified than those which take place in the formal sector. Prices and limits to the contract are not always negotiated in advance, prostitutes may provide anything from two hours to two weeks of full access to their persons, performing non-sexual labour for the client (shopping, tidying, washing, translation, and so on) as well as sexual labour. They will also often act in ways that are taken to signify genuine affection, for instance, holding hands, kissing,

walking arm in arm, sharing a bed (all things that few experienced sex workers in Western countries would do with a client). Taken together, all this means that sex tourist destinations in poor countries or regions offer the tourist not just extensive and cheap opportunities for sexual experience, but also opportunities for types of sexual experience that would not be readily available either back home or in tourist destinations in more affluent countries. This wealth of sexual opportunity leads both male and female tourists to describe such places as 'sexual paradise', 'Fantasy Island' and 'Disneyland' (O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1999). But sexual Disneylands do not exist in nature. They have to be created.

There is some national and regional variation in terms of the history of such creations. In Thailand, as in several other Southeast Asian countries, a period of 'economic colonialism and militarisation in which prostitution is a formalised mechanism of dominance' has been a key stage in the development of sex tourism (Hall, 1994, p. 151; see also Truong, 1990; Bishop and Robinson, 1998). But sex tourism does not always or only involve the maintenance and development of existing large scale, highly commoditized sex industries serving foreign military personnel. It has also emerged in locations where no such sex industry existed, for instance, the Gambia (Morris-Jara, 1996) and Cuba (Fernandez, 1999).

In general, sexual Disneylands are the product of a complex set of linkages between international debt, price fluctuations in global commodity markets, economic development policy and prostitution (Kempadoo, 1999; Bishop and Robinson, 1998; Chant and McIlwaine, 1995), as well as laws and social policies adopted by individual countries (see, for example, Alexander, 1997). The International Monetary Fund agreements and World Bank structural adjustment loans, sector adjustment loans and programs loans that governments of developing countries have had little choice but to enter serve to swell the prostitution labour market, for the policy packages tied to these loans have had a devastating impact on the poor. Structural adjustment processes are widely reported to have undermined traditional forms of subsistence economies, led to high levels of unemployment, redirected subsidies away from social spending and basic commodities towards debt servicing, and often to have encouraged massive currency depreciations leading to a concomitant drop in the price of labour (Anderson and Witter, 1994; NACLA, 1997; Beddoe, 1998; Kempadoo, 1999).

Structural adjustment has created a 'surplus' labouring population, as well as driving down wages of those in work, and has thus been associated with the growth of the informal economic sector in a number of countries as ordinary people (both above and below the age of 18) desperately seek ways in which to earn a living, or supplement or substitute for impossibly low waged employment (see, for instance, Witter and Kirton, 1990; LeFranc, 1994; Safa, 1997; Black, 1995). Though sex tourism involves only a minority of local and migrant persons, expatriates and tourists in any given setting, it is nonetheless the case that prostitution and other forms of tourist-local sexual-economic exchange are amongst the wide range of activities that take place in the informal tourism economy in developing countries (for instance, Phillips, 1999; Cabez, 1999; Ford and Wirawan, 2000; Sánchez Taylor, 2001; Meisch, 1995; Williams, 1999).

The economic and political position of tourists could not be more different from that of locals they come into contact with in developing countries. Even the working class, budget tourist from Britain or Germany, for instance, is in a position to spend about as much on a package holiday in Thailand or the

Caribbean as most ordinary local and migrant people working in the formal or informal tourism economy will earn in a year. This means that tourists, as well as being able to afford to consume sexual services if they so choose, are in a position to freely dispense gifts and sums of money which, though negligible to them represent significant benefits to the average local person. Even the half-empty shampoo bottles, unused medicines and uneaten foodstuffs that the tourist would throw away at the end of a holiday can make an important contribution to a household that is struggling to subsist. Small wonder then, that many locals, both adult and child, seek to befriend tourists and/or to enter into sexual relationships with them.

Moreover, tourists' citizenship of politically powerful nations and their relative affluence combine to bestow upon tourists rights and freedoms that are denied to most of the locals and migrants they meet on their 'Third World' travels. Their passports allow them to cross national borders virtually at whim, and as tourists, they also enjoy a range of social, economic and cultural benefits that effectively amount to a degree of substantive citizenship far greater than that enjoyed by ordinary working class citizens of the countries they visit. A tourist can, for example, expect to be housed in accommodation that is connected to a water supply, as well as to find a range of leisure facilities geared towards his or her interests, shopping facilities to meet their desires as consumers, and so on. This is more than can be said of the average working class Jamaican, Thai, or Kenyan, for example. But tourists' privilege is not merely a reflection of their greater individual spending power. It results in large part from *government* spending on infrastructural development to support tourism (airports, roads, water supply, sewerage disposal, electricity and telephones), something which actually diverts money from projects that might help ordinary local people to enjoy basic social, economic and cultural rights of citizenship (Patullo, 1996; Howard, 1999). Again, sexual relationships with tourists represent one of the few ways in which ordinary local adults and children can tap into privileges reserved for tourists and elite locals.

The tourist and the local are simultaneously brought together and separated by global inequality. Were it not for the huge disparity in terms of political and economic power between affluent and developing nations, the average Western tourist would not be in a position to take long-haul holidays to 'exotic' destinations, and those who did venture to Thailand or Sri Lanka or the Dominican Republic would not find themselves automatically positioned as the local's superior in terms of social, political and economic rights and freedoms. In a different and more equal world, long-haul tourists would find it no harder and no easier to make contact (sexual or otherwise) with local people than they find it to strike up such acquaintances with locals when they visit tourist resorts in their own country or an equally affluent country. Travel between and within affluent countries does not equip the tourist with the power to 'harm or help' the local people they come into contact with, but travel from rich to poor countries does (see Brace and O'Connell Davidson, 1996). In the 'Third World', even the 'third-rate' American/European tourist is king or queen, and whether they dream of holiday romance, or of ready opportunities for anonymous sex, or of affordable commercial sex, or of raping eleven year old girls, or just of being sweet-talked by a series of 'dusky' strangers, they are in a position to make their dreams come true. That's Disneyland.

But the global processes and national social and economic policies which bring tourists and locals face to face as profoundly unequal parties are not enough, on their own, to create the phenomenon of sex tourism. Back home, the same people often could and do find themselves face to face with individuals who are structurally positioned and socially constructed as their unequals, and yet do not necessarily feel the urge to pursue sexual contact with them. In London, Hamburg or San Francisco, for example, we rarely see ordinary, middle-aged men and women flirting with homeless teenagers who sit on the pavements begging for spare change, or inviting them out to dinner and then back home to bed. Understanding Disneyland also requires us to think about the connections between travel, sex and race, and to consider what is being consumed within tourism more generally.

The Scene and the Obscene

In a survey of 661 German men who had had sex with one or more local women or girls in Thailand, the Philippines, Kenya, Brazil and the Dominican Republic, for example, Kliebe and Wilke (1995) found that only a minority, 22%, described themselves as 'sex tourists'. As Gunther (1998, p. 71) observes, the curious phenomenon of sex tourism without sex tourists rests on the fact that many settings of tourism-oriented prostitution allow 'for a personal, noneconomic and self-serving "framing"... of the tourist-prostitute relationship'. Similarly, Sánchez Taylor's (2001) survey of 240 female tourists in the Caribbean found that almost a third had had sex with one or more local men in the course of their holiday. Of these, 57% acknowledged that they had 'helped' their partner out financially or materially. Asked if they had ever used a gigolo or male prostitute, all of them said 'No'. Such findings are partly accounted for by the fact that the open-ended and non-contractual nature of informal sector prostitution allows tourists to delude themselves about the commercial basis of their sexual interactions.

But fantasies about the sexuality of the Other also play an important role in the 'framing' of such encounters as 'not-prostitution'. Rather than being confronted by what they understand and recognise as prostitution, the Western tourist sees local women, men and children dancing, drinking and smooching with tourists, and interprets this as validating racist fantasies of the hypersexual Other (Kempadoo, 1995). The scenes they witness in sex tourist resorts are taken as proof that different meanings attach to sexual behaviour in the host country, that sex is more 'natural' and 'free' amongst local people. Thus, 'open-ended' forms of prostitution in South East Asian or Latin American/Caribbean countries can be (mis)interpreted in such a way as to make tourists feel chosen and desired for themselves, rather than for the contents of their wallets (O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1999; Seabrook, 1997; Bishop and Robinson, 1998).

Awareness that local people are actually prostituting does not necessarily prompt the reappraisal of such ideas. Instead, sex tourists tell themselves that there are 'cultural' differences as regards prostitution, and/or that they are not paying for sex when they give money to a local sexual partner, but rather 'helping' her or him out. Take, for example, the following extract from a guidebook for gay male sex tourists to Thailand:

Many Westerners are troubled about the idea of paying a young man for his time or sex, seeing it as pure prostitution, but this is an oversimplification. In Thailand, as in other less-developed countries, you will be considered a higher-status person... with obligations to those less fortunate than yourself (Hammer, 1997, p. 18).

Jean Baudrillard's (1990, p. 55) discussion of the scene and the obscene is useful here:

More visible than the visible—this is the obscene. More invisible than the invisible—this is the secret. The scene is in the order of the visible. But... The obscene is the end of any scene... [the] hypervisibility of things is also the imminence of their end, the sign of the apocalypse... If all enigmas are resolved, the stars go out. If everything secret is returned to the visible (and more than to the visible: to obscene obviousness), if all illusion is returned to transparency, then heaven becomes indifferent to the earth.

Set in particular scenes, prostitution can appear to the tourist as quite heavenly. As has been noted, in the informal prostitution scene, the commercial basis of sexual interactions between tourists and local or migrant persons is invisible. But more than this, the gulf between each party in terms of life chances, material security, and even age, is concealed. Age means something different in a strange and 'exotic' land where children, like tropical plants, grow fast, and girls of 13 can be attracted to men of 60: 'Here a man has no age', as one expatriate in Costa Rica put it (O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1996b). And last but not least, the local or migrant persons' sexual behaviour is mysterious. Even for tourists who buy explicitly commoditized sex, and who recognise their behaviour as prostitute-use, the discursive construction of racial, ethnic or national difference as sexual difference means that prostitution can retain an enigmatic quality. There is something mysterious about the Other sex worker. Thus, for example, European, North American and Australian tourists marvel at Thai sex workers (unlike junkie street prostitutes or cold, hard-bitten professionals back home, they seem to be 'nice girls' who 'do it for their families' and are truly 'warm and caring') and at Brazilian and Dominican sex workers who 'seem to really enjoy the sex' (O'Connell Davidson, 1995, 1998; Kruhse Mount-Burton, 1995; Cohen, 1982).

But racism and ethnic Othering takes many forms, and its relation to sex is not always one of magical illusion, nor do all those who use prostitutes want such illusions. For some clients, the obscene is not the end but the beginning of sexual pleasure. They *want* to enter a pornutopia (see Hartsock 1983, p. 175), where women and girls are paid 'fucking machines'; or they want cheap sex, or 'dirty' sex, sex with someone they view as low and debased—sex with someone to be 'immediately devoured' rather than 'seduced', to paraphrase Baudrillard (1990, p. 59). Who better to fulfil such desires than sex workers belonging to groups that are in general socially devalued on grounds of race, ethnicity or 'caste'? All of these points hold good in relation to both paedophile and 'normal' sex tourists.

And tourists' sexual behaviour is also shaped by the discursive construction of tourist destinations as liminal spaces in which it is both possible and desirable to suspend normal routines and transgress the rules that govern daily life. This

means it is not only inexpensive and convenient to engage in what Joane Nagel (2003, p. 17) terms 'ethnosexual adventuring' and 'ethnosexual invasion' (that is, recreational sex with, or sexual abuse of, members of other ethnic groups) in tourist centres in developing countries, but also guilt-free. No matter where they come from, a great many tourists share the sentiment behind the Japanese adage 'shameless behaviour during a trip is to be scraped off one's mind' (Allison, 1994, p. 140).

Saying 'No to Child Sex Tourism!'

If 'children' are to be defined as persons under the age of 18, then it is extraordinarily difficult to sustain the idea of a clear, sharp boundary between 'child sex tourism' on the one hand, and 'sex tourism' and 'tourism' on the other. 'Ordinary' tourists who visit brothels or use street prostitutes, like 'ordinary' clients in other settings, do not necessarily care very much whether the prostitute they use is fifteen or sixteen or twenty or older, providing they fancy the look of her. The same point holds good for those tourists who find sexual partners in the informal tourist-related prostitution sector, where the bulk of child prostitution often takes place. For how are tourists to tell the exact age of the locals who proposition them, especially given that many are drunk by the time they 'pull'? The main ambition of many sex tourists—male and female—that Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor and I interviewed in Latin America and the Caribbean was to 'party' and enjoy the novel experience of going out to bars and clubs and being surrounded by a bevy of 'lovely young ladies' or 'gorgeous young guys', all miraculously 'up for it' (O'Connell Davidson and Sánchez Taylor, 1996a,b; 2001). Such people are not paedophiles, nor do they conform to the dominant stereotype of the 'sex tourist'. They do not go to seedy brothels where women and children are visibly brutalised by brothel keepers. But they will have sex with a local fifteen year old if she or he approaches them in a disco, smiles, flirts and dances with them, and offers to come back to their room. And in the morning, if she or he asks for US\$10 for the taxi fare home, they will give it, maybe with a little extra, just to be kind. They will feel no worse about this interaction, possibly better even, than they will feel about their other interactions with locals—the boy who shines their shoes, the woman or teenager who cleans their room, the small child who washes sand from their feet as they lie on a sun lounger on the beach in exchange for a few coins, the old woman who pleads with them to buy fruit from her, the little beggar child sitting on the pavement outside their hotel. The sex, like the sun, the sand, the drinking, the excess and above all the conspicuous waste (of food, energy, natural resources, and time) in places where local people cannot afford to waste anything at all is all part of the tourist experience. It is all part of the 'local colour', the 'party atmosphere', the 'exotic beach resort with a great nightlife' that tourists have been sold, not by 'organised child sex tour operators', but by big, respectable, mainstream tourism companies.

Because campaigns against 'child sex tourism' focus attention on the minority of 'deviant' tourists who travel in pursuit of sex with young children, they actually ask very little of the tourist industry. The industry can be loudly applauded for assisting with the distribution of baggage tags emblazoned with the logo 'No to child sex tourism!', for agreeing to monitor accredited members of travel agents' associations to ensure they are not advertising 'child sex tours',

for being willing to show in-flight videos telling people that it is illegal and wrong to have sex with six year olds. And very few campaigners insist that the industry address questions about the derisory wages paid to hotel workers, or think about how this might contribute to their willingness to accept 'bribes' and 'tips' for turning a blind eye to the activities of tourists, or speak about the social costs of tourism, and the fact that profits from tourism are largely repatriated to affluent sending countries and so will never 'trickle down' to those who pick up tourists' litter, clean their toilets, make their beds, serve their food, and fulfill their sexual fantasies.

Saying 'No to child sex tourism!' also deflects attention from the exploitation of child labour in the tourist industry more generally. As Maggie Black (1995, p. 9) comments, 'sexual exploitation is not the only hazard relating to the employment of young people' within the tourist economy, and yet 'it is the only one on which attention appears to focus'. Furthermore, as Kempadoo (1999, p. 292) observes:

the emphasis on child prostitution as the main problem in sex tourism can be seen to quietly allow other forms of prostitution to continue to take place without hindrance, scrutiny, or attention to the human rights of women and men who provide sexual services in the tourist industry.

Worse still, it lends the cloak of legitimacy to violations of sex workers' rights (both adult and child) by police and other state actors, who have in many places responded to international pressure to end 'child sex tourism' by simply clamping down on those working in informal sector prostitution. In the Dominican Republic, for example, women and teenagers in tourist resorts were frequently rounded up by police as a response to international pressure to address the problem of 'child sex tourism' (to give an idea of the scale, 170 were arrested in a single night in a single tourist resort during one raid in 1998). Once remanded in police custody, there were no beds to sleep on, and the women and girls had no entitlement to food until such time as they were convicted. After being held in these conditions for between one and four days, they were taken to court where they were required to pay a fine in order to be released. Haitian women and teenagers were deported. Women also report having been beaten or raped by the police, as well as subject to extortion (Cabezas, 1999). This situation is not unique to the Dominican Republic. The numbers of women and teenagers who have ended up deported, or behind bars, or in 're-education', 'rehabilitation' or whatever euphemism is preferred, as a result of international concern about 'child sex tourism' far outstrips the number of Western paedophiles or men like Michael Clarke who have been similarly treated. This fact alone should, I believe, give campaigners pause for thought.

More generally, I would conclude that because campaigns against 'child sex tourism' have detached the phenomenon from its political, economic and social basis, treating it as a discrete problem that can and should be tackled primarily through better laws and stronger law enforcement, they have deflected popular and policy attention from the structural inequalities that underpin the exploitation of local children, women and men in both the sex trade and other economic sectors in the developing world. So long as they construct 'child sex tourism' in this way, such campaigns are likely to have a limited impact upon the problem they set out to address, and they will continue to miss the opportunity to challenge the dominant and enormously destructive myths that

inform popular Western attitudes towards 'migration' and movement in the contemporary world.

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on a chapter from the author's forthcoming book on children in the global sex trade, to be published by Polity Press in 2004. The support of the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain, which funded the author's research on sex tourism in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, with Jacqueline Sánchez Taylor, is gratefully acknowledged (Award No: R000237625).

Notes

1. In 1992, a Lauda Air inflight magazine 'contained a fictitious postcard supposedly sent by a German tourist. The front showed a pre-pubescent naked child and the "message" on the back told of the erotic pleasures of the Bangkok Baby Club. There were public protests on Bangkok outside the airline office, but the airline owner, Nicky Lauda, tended to treat the whole episode as a big joke' (O'Grady, 1996, p. 60).

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