A Foucauldian Analysis of Power and Prostitution: Comparing Sex Tourism and Sex Work Migration

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Abstract

Global postcolonial power dynamics are reconstituted in the sexual-economic relationships of dependency between sex workers from former colonies and their American and British clients. Rather than debating whether prostitution is a social right or wrong, Foucault’s analysis of power redirects the discussion on the historical and present function of sex work. Constructed by global and local power relations, prostitution produces contradictory effects: it fosters tourism in developing countries and is condemned as criminal in the US and UK. These effects have been reproduced through postcolonial discourses of racism, victimisation and anti-trafficking, which result in curtailing the economic and physical mobility of subaltern sex workers. By comparing sex tourism in the Global South with migrants’ experiences of prostitution in Global North, this paper reveals the unequal power dynamics between the nations of which the sex worker and client originate.
Introduction

The sexual-economic relations between people in the Global North and South are constructed by and have come to represent the wider postcolonial economic and political power relations. The relationships between sex workers in the Global South and their American and European clients analogise the unequal power dynamics between the nations of which the sex worker and client originate. This argument is demonstrated by comparing the contexts of sex tourism with migrant prostitution in developed countries. To understand the political, social and economic construction of contexts, this paper analyses the historical, colonial dependency of colonialized nations and people on British and American imperialists. Highlighting the personal and political relationships, case studies reveal the lived experiences of migrant sex work mostly in the US and UK as well as sex tourism in a variety of locations around the world, but mostly focusing on the Caribbean. Prostitution is described through the Foucauldian lens of the political economy of sexuality – how sexuality and prostitution are products of processes such as postcolonial politics and global economic inequality (Padilla 2007). This paper first outlines the Foucauldian theoretical basis of analysing prostitution through power relations. Moreover prostitution is instrumental to (re)producing global unequal power dynamics and restricting mobility. The second section discusses the postcolonial relationships of sex tourism and their embedment in discourses of racism and economic imperialism. The final section reveals how sex work migration or ‘trafficking’ is intertwined with the dominant victimisation and anti-immigration discourses, which in effect restricts the mobility of sex workers.

1. Theoretical Basis: Foucault

1.1. Foucauldian Critique of Liberal and Radical Theories of Prostitution

Michael Foucault’s theories of power and discourse provide a critical perspective on the experiences of prostitution in the Global North and South through revealing their historical, genealogical constructions (Spargo 1999). Such a position differs from the dominant liberal vs. radical feminist debates on prostitution. Radical feminists often ascribe to the ‘oppression paradigm’, which considers prostitution to be male violence against women (Weitzer 2010; Freeman 1989-1990). Women can never consent to what these prostitution abolitionists consider coercive sexual exploitation, slavery or trafficking (Barry 1995). As the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women conclude, ‘prostitution is possible because men’s power as a dominating class over women exists.’ Taking the opposing
viewpoint, liberal feminists argue sex workers deserve equal rights. Social stigma and legal criminalisation prohibits society from accepting their profession as dignified, emotional labour (Freeman 1989-1990; Sanders 2005). By considering only male oppression, stigma and criminalisation as the underlying factors contributing to problems in prostitution, both the radical and liberal feminist views fail to account for complex causes and effects of sex work. A Foucauldian approach incorporates power relations in discussions of sex work and situates them in global/local economic, cultural political discourses (O’Connell Davidson 1998). For example, the liberal ‘prostitution rights’ discourse marginalises the illegal migrants who are systematically excluded from citizenship rights and are persecuted by the legal system in developed countries. In ignoring the barriers of subaltern sex workers to claim rights, the liberal feminist perspective fails to address why sex workers may not wish to publicly or privately acknowledge their acts as prostitution. This is demonstrated in Padilla’s (2007: 15) research in the Dominican Republic’s male sex industry, where the term ‘sex work’ as a self-identified profession was rarely used in social discourse outside of sexual health contexts.

Foucault’s theory of power is essential to revealing the how sexual-economic relationships in prostitution are continually produced by the postcolonial powers exercised by subaltern and American/British governments. Diverging from radical and liberal feminist conceptualizations, Foucault (1998) conceives of power not as a possession to oppress others, but rather as a productive force intrinsic to all social relations and knowledge. Although scholars recognize power is essential to prostitution, they often view the distribution of power as hierarchically top-down (Alexander 1998: 191; O’Connell Davidson (1998: 5). Whereas Foucault (1998) viewed power as fluid and exercised through contested ‘bottom-up’ practices. These practices and co-existing silences define discourses, which are linguistic structures policing and influencing what is possible to know (Foucault 1977). Foucault (1980) views power and knowledge as producing each other – where there is knowledge, there is power – they are reciprocal concepts. Discourses, constructed by power/knowledge relations, control and normalise what is validated as ‘true’ (Foucault 1980; 1998). Rather than allying with either a radical or liberal feminist perspective on the ‘true nature’ of prostitution, this paper engages with how prostitution is constituted by discourses and power relations.

Foucault’s later work (1998; 1970) reveals the interrelated concepts governmentality and bio-power. Governmentality, the government of one’s self and others through organized practices and
knowledges (institutions, policies, immigration status statements, etc.), exercises bio-power, the power over life (Foucault 1991d). Bio-power is a technology of power that governs individual bodies and populations (Foucault 1991a). Governmentality and bio-power are ‘diplomatic-military techniques’ essential to the modern apparatuses of security and discipline (Foucault 1991d; 1991c).

1.2. *Sexuality and the Body as Constructed through Discourse*

Foucault’s theories question the functions of legal systems and moralities condemning, but also defining the sexual-economic exchanges in prostitution. In *History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1998) and *Volume 2* (1991b), Foucault explores how sexuality becomes essential to the operation of power in governing both the actions and morals of the individual and population. Power and resistance have shaped the contexts in which sex tourism and migration for prostitution exist. Sexuality exercises power through discourses that are excited (sex tourism) and feared (immigrant sex workers). A Foucauldian perspective highlights the relevance of the body as defined by power relations that construct discourse – the body is given meaning in discourse (Butler 1990; Bell 1992; Fraser and Greco 2005). This signifies that subjective lived experiences are embodied products of economic, political, and social discourses (Foucault 1979; Spargo 1990). Such a view critiques the liberal feminist subject/object binary by seeing people as both subjects and objects (O’Connell Davidson 2005). Simultaneously being an object and subject is demonstrated in a Thai sex worker’s reflection on her relationship with a French sex tourist:

> I feel repulsion for him, because he does not see me, he does not know me. He does not know who I am, he just sees my body and feels his own desire and for him. I am an empty person, I do not exist, so he just fills me with what he is feeling. (Seabrook 2001: 17)

This reflection shows how the body, as a biophysical and cultural construct, is ‘the site at which all forms of domination are ultimately inflicted and registered and it is the site of resistance’ (Bell 1994: 12). Moreover, the body sees its own physical being as a source of economic gain through prostitution.
1.3. **Power in Prostitution: Sex as a Resource**

Various theories on why prostitution exists include unequal sexual power relations between genders (Alexander 1998: 190). For Foucault, gendered power differentials are not ‘matter of fact’, but are products of power. The relation of gender and other social inequalities to prostitution needs to be situated in the notion that sex has both a material economic and symbolic exchange value (de Zalduondo and Bernard 1995: 157). For example in Haiti ‘women’s sex is explicitly perceived to have economic exchange value – to be “her assets”’ (de Zalduondo and Bernard 1995: 166). Although in American and British culture, where ‘love’ and ‘money’ are perceived as opposites, this value is still implicit, especially in prostitution (Zalduondo and Bernard 1995). This perspective of sex as a resource signifies the importance of seeing prostitution as imbedded in the *political economy of sexuality*. This term encompasses globalisation as the process of how macro political-economic dynamics ‘interact with various cultural, historical, and psychosocial meanings of sexuality for the actors themselves’ (Padilla 2007: 23). Prostitution exists because of the economic and political power/value of sex.

2. **Sex Tourism**

2.1. **Defining Prostitution**

As defined by power relations, prostitution fosters sex tourism in developing countries and its condemnation the US and UK. Also prostitution itself is a personification of global power exchanges (Kempadoo 2004). For Alexander (1998) and O’Connell Davidson (1998: 17), prostitution is a sexual-economic contract: ‘for a sum of money the client can command the prostitute for a period of time’. This definition of prostitution may be employed widely in the US and UK, but in the context of sex tourism, prostitution is more ambiguously defined. Sex tourism, especially in the Caribbean, attracts clients through mirroring the ‘normal’ methods of picking up dates in bars or beaches, rather than a formal employment contract (Padilla 2007; O’Connell Davidson 1998). By performing ‘romance’ or a ‘one night stand,’ both the sex worker and client can deny the occurrence of prostitution (Padilla 2007). Prostitution is thus scripted in a different way than in the US and UK, since the price and sex act negotiations happen after the pick up (Kempadoo 2004). The sexual-economic exchange can then be framed as ‘helping out’ those in poverty and face discrimination, rather than buying sex: ‘there’s nothing you can do to change it [poverty], but you can still be one of
the kind and generous ones who helps’ (Cassirer, cited in O’Connell Davidson 1998: 179). Cassirer’s (1992) guidebook _Travel and the Single Male: The World’s Best Destinations for the Single Male_ never mentions the words prostitution or prostitute, which shows the ambiguity of the sexual-economic exchange in sex tourism. Furthermore the ambiguous notion of ‘helping’ the poor legitimises the implicit power relations and economic disparities in prostitution. Anges (2008: 115) claims that women in the global sex tourism industry ‘view it as an arena of negotiations to improve their own economic situation’. This viewpoint can also apply to (il)legal migrants selling sex in developed countries. The varying definitions of prostitution by academics, clients, and sex workers indicate how the relations of power in each context and lived experience determine what the concept signifies. The global and local value of prostitution underpins the similarities between the ex-colonial sex worker–American/European client relationships and the global South–North economic and political dependencies.

2.2. _Postcolonial Context of the Sexual-Economic Exchange_

Foucault’s main works, such as _Discipline and Punish_ (1977) and _History of Sexuality Vol. 1_ (1998), uncover the history of phenomena in order to understand their present functionality. Since _Discipline and Punish_ (1977), Foucault has utilised genealogies to unmask the power dynamics and discourses enabling industries like sex tourism to flourish. Thus, understanding sex tourism and migration demands historical contextualisation in the colonial power relations that continue to personify and represent prostitution in postcolonialism. Postcolonialism can be broadly defined as an ‘engagement with experience of colonialism and its past and present effects’ at both local and global levels (Quayson 2000: 2). The power dynamics creating the possibility and economic choice to engage in prostitution are products of colonialism and imperialism. Not only did colonialism establish the patterns of economic and social inequality and superiority of white Europeans and Americans, but sexual domination was a means of instituting these economic and political disparities (Kempadoo 2004).

The contemporary phenomenon of sex tourism stems from colonialism, where the categories ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised’ were secured through sexual control (Luibheide 2005: xxiv). Colonial prostitution was a means of controlling a population, such as when ‘British colonial authorities in
India established and/or tolerated brothels to serve British men’ (Alexander 1998: 189). In countries like Kenya and throughout the Caribbean, black female prostitutes provided domestic, agricultural, reproductive and sexual labour for colonialists (Alexander 1998; Padilla 2007). Kempadoo (2004: 39) describes how since the 1492 ‘discovery’ of the Caribbean, ‘the region was raped both metaphorically and figuratively for the benefits of colonial powers and capitalist interests’. Sex was a means to discipline colonial populations. Female sex tourism became established: ‘wealthy white women have always been able to escape to the tropics (Bermuda, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, etc.) over the last 100 years or so for the duration of the winter season’ (de Albuquerque 1999: 90). Sex work in the region was a powerful means for the imperialist nations to assert their dominance (Padilla 2007). Through this colonial sexual relationship, the Caribbean became known as a hypersexual space for sexual liberation (Kempadoo 2004). Indeed ‘the juncture of sexuality, prostitution, and production in colonialism tended to foster racialised, exoticised representations of Caribbean sexuality’ (Padilla 2007: 3). This representation and presumption that locals are ‘naturally’ interested in facilitating sexual-economic exchanges has become globalised to attract tourism.

These representations of the Other\(^1\) were also exported to the global North through transporting the ‘unreasoned’ and ‘uncivilised’ bodies not only through slavery, but also through ‘freak show’ tours. European and Anglo-Saxon sexual-economic gaze is apparent in the tours of ‘Hottentot’ women (currently known as Khoi) from South Africa. These women’s buttocks and vaginas (which were ‘large’ relative to Europeans’) were exploited for public exhibition and groping in Europe during the early 19\(^{th}\) Century (Gilman 1984). Gilman’s (1984) article entitled Hottentots and Prostitutes: On an Iconography of the Sexualized Woman describes not only how black sexuality was seen as the antithesis of 19C European sexual norms, but also how both the bodies of the ‘Hottentot’ and ‘prostitute’ were pathologically represented and feared as ‘ugly’ and ‘primitive’ (Gilman 1984). Both bodies of the ‘Other’ were seen as spectacles, objects in which civilised Europeans could observe anti-morality. The postcolonial lens reveals how power dynamics producing the exploitative (mis)representations of sex workers and the ‘Hottentots’. Such images demonstrate how bodies are ‘totally imprinted by history’ (Foucault 1991c: 83).

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\(^1\) Edward Said’s (1978) Orientalism defines the Other as any individual or group perceived as weak or inferior to the dominant individual culture or society; the latter exercises power over the Other to exclude or subordinate them.
2.3. **The Other – from Colonialism to Tourism**

Colonialism initiated a dynamic of subaltern nations to be dependent on their external rulers, an unequal relationship perpetuated in postcolonial industries like tourism. Colonial and postcolonial sex tourism embodies that dependent relationship. The US, UK and international community promote the development of many subaltern countries by attracting Anglo-American tourists, which in theory, will boost the economy (Kempadoo 2004; O’Connell Davidson 1998). The World Bank’s (2005) report entitled *A Time to Choose: Caribbean Development in the 21st Century* praises Caribbean countries’ tourism industries, but fails to mention the growing informal economy of sex tourism. Governmental regimes in developing and developed countries establish that ‘sex tourism in the Caribbean is generally mutually beneficial’ (de Albuquerque 1999: 87). This statement reproduces the global economic, political, and sexual hierarchy privileging American and European tourists. Furthermore it ignores the historical purpose of sex tourism to establish colonial dependency through unequal sexual-economic exchanges. In a Foucauldian vein, Padilla (2007: 6) reveals the function of the sex tourism economy in the postcolonial context:

> Caribbean people once again find themselves subsumed within a global economy in which their sexual labour functions as a cheap resource that is intimately related to patterns of work and consumption in the ‘developed’ metropolises of North America and Europe.

Padilla (2007) describes the continuity of Caribbean people’s sexual-economic exchanges with tourists as a means to satisfy the sexual desires of former colonialists. Furthermore these exchanges personify the unequal relationship between the Caribbean and the global North. It is deemed more acceptable, if not charitable to engage in sexual-economic relations with ‘primitive’ or ‘natural’ people who exhibit their sexuality in a way that deviates from the Anglo-Saxon Christian moral discipline (O’Connell Davidson 1998).

2.4. **Postcolonial Governmentality in Military Sex Tourism**

A South Korean case study demonstrates the on-going relevance of sexual power in postcolonial governmentalities. Prostitution contributes to governing international and personal relations between imperial and subaltern nations. Unequal political and economic power relations established during imperialism are visible through analysing how instrumental prostitution is in fulfilling both American
and South Korean governments’ security interests. In South Korea sex tourism also takes shape in selling sex to foreign militaries. Since the Korean War and permanent stationing of US troops, ‘over one million Korean women have served as sex providers for the U.S. military’ (Moon 1997: 1). Moon analyses how this ‘staple’ military-orientated prostitution fulfils the American and Korean ‘bilateral security interests’ in keeping the American soldiers ‘happy’ and motivated to fight for South Koreans (1997: 2). This policy is a result of colonial women being used as ‘war booty’ by the military – institutionally ‘controlling women for the sake of militarising men’ (Enloe cited in Moon 1997: 11).

The sex worker-soldier relationships personify the governmental and economic patron (US) – client (South Korea) relations. This personification is also applicable to the postcolonial relationship many subaltern sex workers have with tourist clients, such as in the Caribbean. This case study also demonstrates the inextricability of sex tourism from the imperialist histories that produced global South-North interdependencies and the governmentality that reproduces personal sexual-economic patron-client relationships. Although political governmentalities may foster prostitution, the dominant moral discourse in South Korea still stigmatises the work and the mixed-race children that result. Moon (1997: 6) describes how the intersection of racism and military sex tourism produces highly discriminated against bodies that are living testimonies to their parents’ deviant profession:

[The] elderly mother, ill and weak, upon my visit to their home, has been a GI prostitute catering to black Americans during the 1950s and 1960s. … Sonha’s Mom and her sister were fully Korean in their speech, mannerisms, and customs. But they were fully aware that there was no Korea for them outside the small camptown. Because of their black skin and racial features, their marginalisation from Korean society was most severe.

These sex workers constitute South Korea’s invisible underclass, silenced by the dominant discourse of racism rendering them as a shameful ‘Other’.

2.5. The Discourse of Blackness as ‘Authentic’ Sexuality

The discourse of racism simultaneously produces the condemnation of black sex workers in Korea and the promotion of ‘blackness’ by sex workers seeking to sell their bodies to tourists in the Caribbean. These conflicting discourses demonstrate how the shame or marketability of blackness is dependent on global and individual power relations. The colonial and postcolonial stereotype of black
Caribbean people as hypersexual, ‘primitive’ and ‘animalistic’ legitimises American and British sex tourism in the area (Sanchez Taylor 2006). To explain complexity of selling blackness, a focus on black male prostitution opens a discussion of sex tourism beyond the dichotomy of ‘passive victims and malicious victimizers, and to explore the significance of race for their experience of exploitation’ (Sanchez Taylor 2006: 45). Both blackness and sex are marketed as ‘authentic’ experiences. ‘Westerners think that sex is the ultimate authentic human experience. ...They think they see the profoundest communication in what is the loneliest experience in the world’ (Anonymous cited in Seabrook 2001: 14) However, rather than deciding what experiences are deserving of ‘authenticity,’ one should reveal the economic function of performing sexual ‘authenticity’.

An ‘insatiable’ sexual desire is marketed through selling the ‘authentic’ sexual and cultural experience with real black men. Through sex tourism consumers can buy a sexual experience with a hyper-masculine, well endowed native that almost mirrors the real thing (Kempadoo 2004). Bernstein’s (2007) concept of ‘bounded authenticity’ helps analyse the discourse fostering tourists’ desire to engage in the Caribbean economic-cultural exchange sold by sex workers such as ‘beach boys’ (Dominican Republic) or ‘rent-a-dreads’ (Jamaica). The tourism industry widely popularises the idea of experiencing foreign ‘authentic’ culture and sex workers capitalise on providing tours of their ‘native’ life and body. ‘Beach boys’ may gain social distinction by being seen with a white, sexy woman (de Albuquerque 1999) – as if the former colonialist is now submissive to the subaltern black patriarch. Masculine ‘authenticity’ is seemingly proven by control over the courting process and sex act itself, something in colonialism, they perhaps did not control. They ‘usually try to reassert their power by attempting to control the sexual encounter, taking charge of the tourist’s vacation … and by skillfully manipulating the racialised sexual fantasies of their clients’ (de Albuquerque 1999: 109). These fantasies mask the personal inequalities between tourists and sex workers, and are furthering ‘the long-standing relationship of dependency of the Caribbean on the global North’ (Kempadoo 2004: 121).

Despite sex workers’ performance of ‘hustling’ and asserting control over the sexual-economic exchange, the client still leverages the vital economic dominance, as during colonialism (de Albuquerque 1999). These sex workers market their cultural and sexual ‘authenticity’ to Americans and Britons, who may perceive reality as increasingly ‘artificial’ (Bernstein 2007). Yet selling the
Caribbean ‘authentic’ experience is not strictly bound to O’Connell Davidson’s (1998) ‘$x$ services for $x$ amount of money’ equation of prostitution. The sex tourist ‘genuine experience’ can last days or years and include friendship and close intimacy in addition to sexual attention (Sanchez Taylor 2006). The postcolonial representation of blackness as a more natural and hypersexual Other (O’Connell Davidson 2005) demonstrates how racist discourses are not only oppressive, but also productive and financially viable (Padilla 2007). Buying real sex or romance with a ‘primitive’ man legitimises sex tourism as a means of gaining cultural capital for both the tourist and the sex worker.

3. (Il)legal Sex Work Migration

3.1. Racism in the Government of Migrant Sex Workers in the US and UK

In the US and UK being ‘authentically’ black is not usually a marketable commodity, instead blackness is stigmatised like the ‘Hottentot’ were in the 19C. Racism reproduces economic marginalisation because the body of the person (especially immigrant) of colour is seen to manifest danger and legitimise hard police tactics (Butler 2005). This occurs despite the fact that sex workers of colour are some of the most vulnerable to imprisonment and violence in the industry because they are overrepresented in street sex work (Alexander 1998). For example, Alexander (1998) found that in San Francisco hotel security were more likely to stop and search black people regardless of if they were legally documented. Furthermore, (il)legal immigrant sex workers may also be discriminated against within the sex industry. Bott (2006: 24) describes the case of British migrant lap dancers who distance themselves from their working class and eastern European colleagues to reveal a process of ‘disidentification with a disreputable Other’. This process of internalising the dominant racist ideologies about the Other has been recently demonstrated by former Secretary of State for Justice Jack Straw. After two Pakistani men were jailed for heading a gang that groomed and abused mostly white teenage girls, Straw blamed the phenomenon on ‘Pakistani heritage men ... [who think white girls are] are easy meat’ (Batty 2011). This viewpoint collectivises ‘authentic’ immigrant culture as not only backwards, but dangerous and inherently suspect of harming (and raping) white British people. Straw’s statement personifies anti-immigrant and racist ideologies governing national postcolonial discourses of exclusion/inclusion of migrant sex workers. Furthermore Straw demonstrates Mai’s (2009: 2) claim that ‘debates around migration and the sex industry are often
characterised by an ethnicist anti-migrant discourse’ which focuses mainly on the trafficking and exploitation of women.

3.2.  **Morality, Racism and Victimisation in the Global North’s Criminalisation of Prostitution**

Racist narratives have racialised and demonised subaltern sex workers residing in the Global North. Since the 19th and 20th centuries, the patronising discourse of ‘saving’ immoral, poor, fallen women through criminalising their sex work has developed in the US and UK (de Albuquerque 1999: 103). The criminalisation of prostitution accompanied the pathologisation of the deviant woman – both processes became a means to classify, discipline and govern the subject (Agustin 2005; Spargo 1999; Foucault 1998). These ‘projects aimed to help women who renounced their own immorality, now a whole social and laic discourse was dedicated to the identification of victims’ (Agustin 2005). These governmental exercises of power underpin the current discourse of sex workers as victims and migrants as victims of immoral trafficking. The prostitution of (il)legal migrants became criminalised because the act is seen as possibly corrupting the American and European population’s white ‘race’ and Christian morality. In colonial states, the pathologisation of Caribbean black women’s sexuality and agency resulted in perceiving these women as sexually irresponsible and blamed for the production of hypersexual males (Kempadoo 2004). The colonialist gaze saw Caribbean women as ‘loose’, uninhabited, and therefore more sexually accessible (Kempadoo 2004). Governments ‘saved’ women by criminalizing sex work in imperialist countries or legitimising their prostitution in colonies. This process initiated a lasting relationship of ‘enlightened’ colonial powers governing subaltern women to infantilize them as incompetent of controlling their own sexuality. This hegemonic representation of immigrants is re-inscribed in postcolonial morals and policies (Bell 1994). At present, the only means for illegal sex workers to receive support from US and Western European governments is to claim that they are victims and that they render their work immoral (Andrijasevic 2003). The governmental relationship between migrant sex workers and the agencies and policies attempting to ‘save’ them patronises migrants, assumes victimhood and denies agency. Moreover the prohibition sex work implicitly draws moral boundaries around the US and UK to ‘protect’ those nations from criminalised, sexualised and racialised (post)colonial migrants.
3.3. **Moral/Immoral Spaces and Borders**

The US and many European states have been constructed as ‘moral’ spaces dedicated to pathologising and disciplining deviant behaviour such as prostitution. This global power dynamic also reflects the personal prostitution relationships creating a moral hierarchy privileging American and European clients at the expense of sex workers. Since colonialism, ‘moral’ spaces have been (re)imagined by contrasting them with the ‘immoral’ Other. Located in ex-colonial states like the Caribbean, the Other space ‘unleashes’ *natural sexual desires*, permitting ‘repressed’ foreigners to engage promiscuously with locals (O’Connell Davidson 1998). This image of the Other facilitated sexual-economic exchanges and enhanced colonial governance through sex as well as rendering colonised people dependent on imperialist economies and sexual interests (Kempadoo 2004). Establishing ‘moral’ territories functions to exclude migrants and others exhibiting behaviours that may replace dominant Christian ideals with ‘sins like prostitution (Bell 1994). Colonial eroticisation of the Other body also functioned to restrict the movement of colonised people to the global North through fearing their exotic, sexual power (Padilla 2007). Essentially colonialism co-produced the ‘mobilities of some subjects and the immobilities of others’ (Ahmed et. al. 2003: 10). Thus the choice to migrate or travel continues to depend ‘on specific enabling or disenabling relations of power’ (Ahmed et. al. 2003: 5).

Some (il)legal migrants also perceive the US and Europe as an Other, a place ‘to create new identities and a better life for themselves and their families (Jagori 2005: 161). The global economic inequalities, established through colonisation, currently encourage migration to the source of the global economic wealth in developed countries. ‘Globalization and neoliberal economic policies have precipitated migration’ as a result of the unstable economic opportunities they create (Jagori 2005: 169). In some contexts prostitution itself can be considered a form of resistance to social sexual norms, to subsistent wages, or against the global feminisation of poverty (Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). Prostitution can be a means to support oneself and/or family in a more cost-effective (more money, less time spent) method than other illegal migrant work (Alexander, 1998). Nevertheless prostitution still manifests the dependent postcolonial relationship between the global North and South. White wealthy Europeans and Americans’ global mobility contrast ‘the immobilization of illegal aliens who are sent back (again and again) to their places of origin’ (Ahmed et. al. 2003: 14).
3.4. **Bio-power and Governmentality in Border Controls Against Migrant Sex Workers**

State border controls exemplify bio-power, power over populations, through their ‘policing of who does and does not belong’ (Ahmed et. al. 2003: 5). Exclusion of the Other – sex workers – from colonialism to postcolonialism has barred their legal entry to the US and Europe. ‘There is often no way for prostitutes to legally travel to a country and obtain work as a prostitute’ (Alexander 1998: 200). In the US, both the 1875 Page Act and 1965 Immigration and Naturalisation Act explicitly exclude sex workers and others demonstrating deviant sexualities from emigrating (Somerville 2005). This policy has been instrumental in narrowing legal immigration to building white heterosexual families in the US (Somerville 2005). For example in 1993, *Operation Hold the Line* was an American police campaign to prevent Mexican transvestite sex workers, *vestidas*, from crossing the US-Mexico border at night to sell sex (Solomon 2005). This instance of migrant sex work was portrayed as the epitome of social disorder through the homophobic and xenophobic lens of politicians and mainstream media (Solomon 2005). By excluding particular sexualities and sexual practices, immigration control technology can expedite the production of heteropatriarchal families in the national population (Luibheide 2005). As queer theorists continue to argue, governing sex, sexuality and prostitution is inherent in governing populations (Spargo 1999).

3.5. **The Discourses of Victimisation and Trafficking**

The colonial sexual governmentality has been reproduced through the unequal relationship between the US and UK (‘agents’) and subaltern sex workers (‘victims’). This relationship infantilises the ex-colonial subject in contradictory discourses. In the context of sex tourism, the belief is widely held that locals ‘naturally’ consent to sexual-economic relations, or at least that the phenomenon is ‘inevitable’ (Kempadoo 2004). This perception is deeply rooted in the colonialist legacy legitimising and promoting prostitution for American or European clients. On the contrary (il)legal migrants in the Global North are perceived to never be able to consent to selling their body, since they are predominately represented as victims of abusive, coerced trafficking (Andrijasevic 2003). Trafficking, like prostitution during the 19C, is a phenomenon that ‘necessitates’ prevention by moral Americans and Europeans. However denying migrant sex workers the ability to migrate or sex work results in ‘the treatment of all movement of women as coerced and reinforcing assumptions of Third World women as victims, as infantile and as incapable of decision-making’ (Agnes 2008: 116). This ‘genders’ the concepts of victimisation and consent – women are victims, men inherently consent (Agnes 2008; Andrijasevic 2003; Wijers and Lap-Chew 1997). Weizter (2010) argues that the
victim/perpetrator dichotomy does not accurately describe the lived experiences of sex workers because power relations silence particular voices in the sex worker victimisation discourse.

Postcolonial lived experiences in sex work demonstrate how the concept of consent operates within a spectrum of power dynamics which continue to condition exclusion and limit ‘choices’ as during colonialism. The case of a 42 year-old Ukrainian woman in the UK shows the limitation of the available employment options as well as the experiences of stigma in prostitution and exploitation in unskilled labour:

This job [selling sex in a flat] is better; the money is good and quick. The cleaner job was really hard work and no good money. I still say I'm a cleaner, I have to lie, but I don't want to be one (from Mai 2009: 3)

Consent conceptualised as a spectrum is further demonstrated in the case of Jane, who was trafficked knowing that she would work in prostitution, but not that she would be physically and economically abused (Ejalu 2006: 175). Yet anti-sex trafficking campaigners and politicians ignore the ‘modern day slavery’ caused by widespread economic disparity that often motivates people’s choice to engage in trafficking and prostitution (Jagori 2005). For example, in India widespread de-industrialisation in former textile mill towns like Ahmendabad, unemployment correlates to the flux of sex workers and demonstrates how ‘choices’ are confined within power relations (Jagori 2005: 163). In other cities like Gujarat, migrants often work in highly exploitative factories for extremely low pay. ‘Many units are run in mafia style, with security guards who do not permit free entry or exit. The workers are virtually captive’ (Jagori 2005: 168). These lived experiences of consent personify postcolonial power relations to which the subjects are inevitably ‘captive’. Moreover function of the dominant trafficking discourse in the media and national and international governance is to render other forms of economic and social abuse invisible.

3.6. Defining Trafficking as Violent

Trafficking and victimisation are both fluid concepts which are constructed by bio-power and other power relations conditioning who is blamed, victimised and deported for prostitution in the UK and US (Weitzer 2010). Dominant discourses frame trafficking as the ultimate deprivation of agency. Yet such anti-trafficking moralisation has functioned to exclude and deport illegal immigrants selling sex.
Although trafficking is often associated with coercion, Bindman (1997) defines the term as migration assisted by a third party. However Hague (2006: 6) claims the concept is an ‘anti-social and morally degrading, heinous event’ that differs from migration based on the victims’ increased exposure to harm. Hague’s (2006) definition ascribes to the American and British dominant utilitarian perceptions of harm, which implicitly creates a dichotomy between deserving and undeserving claims to victimhood. By labelling trafficking morally representable, Hague (2006) fails to consider first how focusing only the routine abuse in trafficking shields the violence subaltern migrant workers face in underpaid employment (Jagori 2005). Second, her moralistic definition reproduces the stereotype of trafficking as inherently ‘bad’ and dangerous (O’Connell Davidson 2006). Third, her anti-trafficking stance is inextricable from the postcolonial power dynamics and xenophobia that institute immigration barriers, which compel people to use trafficking as a means to migrate.

3.7. How the Trafficking Discourse Delegitimises Immigration and Prostitution

The UK and US governments conflate the phenomena and definitions of (il)legal migration and coerced trafficking to delegitimise immigration, especially if the migrants sell sex. In the US and the UK, trafficking is blamed on large organised crime networks, which profit off of the exploitation of women (Acharya 2006). This policy signifies that ‘within the discursive economy of illegal migration, the border becomes a site of crime’ (Andrijasevic 2003: 256). Thus the solution to trafficking becomes tighter border control. Although (il)legal migrants are often portrayed as embodiments of criminal trafficking, Mai’s (2009: 1) research with 100 migrant sex workers in the UK found that ‘although some migrants are subject to coercion and exploitation, a majority are not’. The policy emphasis on trafficking is reinforced in the 2006 UK New Labour Coordinated Prostitution Strategy (Sagar 2009). The legislation ignores the social, economic and political exclusion of sex workers, which constrains their access to support services and thus their ‘choice’ to exit prostitution through service use (Sagar 2009). By masking exclusion, the strategy fails to realise the increased vulnerability illegal migrant sex workers face in seeking support – if they report trafficking, they may risk being deported as illegal aliens (O’Connell Davidson 2006; Ejalu 2006). The exclusionary policies and anti-trafficking rhetoric exercise bio-power by determining who ‘deserve’ to live and work in the Global North.

Blaming sex work on external, informal ‘crime organisations’ silences discussion on the accountability of the national and international bodies to their role in the proliferation of migrant sex
work (O’Connell Davidson 2006). In fact, governments and economies shape the growth of the criminalised, informal economies, which includes prostitution. The ‘juridico-material formation of borders’ appears to prevent the migration ‘crisis’ imagined in mainstream media and politics (Andrijasevic 2003: 253); actually they function to re-inscribe the unequal power relations between former imperial and ex-colonial states. Governments fail to realise that the strengthening of the borders to Europe and North America actually causes more migrants to use illegal methods to immigrate into developed countries (Andrijasevic 2003). Borders induce a fear of deportation and the necessity to secretly cross borders (Andrijasevic 2003). The focus on sex trafficking, rather than immigration, prevents examination of increasing global economic disparities. Additionally, the focus on trafficking obscures the routine abuse and exploitation many people face during migration or the search for employment (Jagori 2005).

Particularly, the state looks at women as victims who must be protected from trafficking, and such protection often becomes a tool for the violation of women’s rights by restricting their right to move. Moreover the focus on prostitution as the main site of trafficking has diverted the debate from one of rights and vulnerabilities to issues of morality. (Jagori 2005: 172)

Thus the effects of the dominant trafficking discourse appear to restrict the mobility of subaltern people through claiming to ‘save’ them through criminalisation and immobilisation, which indicates a striking continuity with colonial regulation of sexuality. The consistent pathologisation of the subaltern Other personifies the patronising postcolonial policies against trafficking and the economic system of dependence. In both past and present eras it is the ‘material and legal immigration apparatus which fosters the legal, economic and physical vulnerability of trafficked women’ (Andrijasevic 2003: 252). The almost exclusive media and political focus on trafficking in women reproduces the colonialist stereotype of the ‘Other’ woman as subordinate and incompetent of decision-making, which renders them as unable to consent or chose to engage in prostitution.

4. Conclusion
The lived experiences of sex workers in the contexts of sex tourism and migration to the UK and US analogue the economic and postcolonial power relationships between the Global North and South. This has been demonstrated by viewing prostitution as inextricable from the global political economy of sexuality, where sex is an economic resource (Padilla 2007). The representation of African and
Caribbean people as hypersexual has fostered sex tourism since colonialism. This construct is reproduced as postcolonial subjects market themselves as sexually available. Unequal power relations result from such stereotypes and associated economic dependency. The South Korean policy of securing prostitution for the US military hypostatizes the dynamic of dependency between sex workers and foreign clients (Moon 1997). Meanwhile, the Global North exercises bio-power by excluding deviant sexual practices of migrants, such as prostitution.

By moving beyond the liberal vs. radical prostitution debate, this essay has revealed how political and moral discourses prohibiting sex work and trafficking function to restrict the mobility of subaltern people. The Global North’s impermeable borders continue to increase trafficking as a means for subaltern migrants to augment economic opportunities. The (mis)representation of sex work migrants as trafficked victims has been instrumental to limiting the avenues for legal immigration. This representation and migrants’ fear of deportation are barriers to resistance that should be further explored since the phenomenon perpetuates the subjugation of the Global South.

Approaching prostitution through a Foucauldian analysis of power, this paper has investigated sex tourism: postcolonial governmentality and the function of racist discourses to subjugate the Other. It has also addressed sex work migration to the UK and US and revealed the victimisation and trafficking discourses which demonise these immigrants and bar their entry into those nations. In summary, unequal power relations determine the sexual-economic interdependency of the Global North and South — a relationship that is embodied in the lived experiences of sex workers and their clients.

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